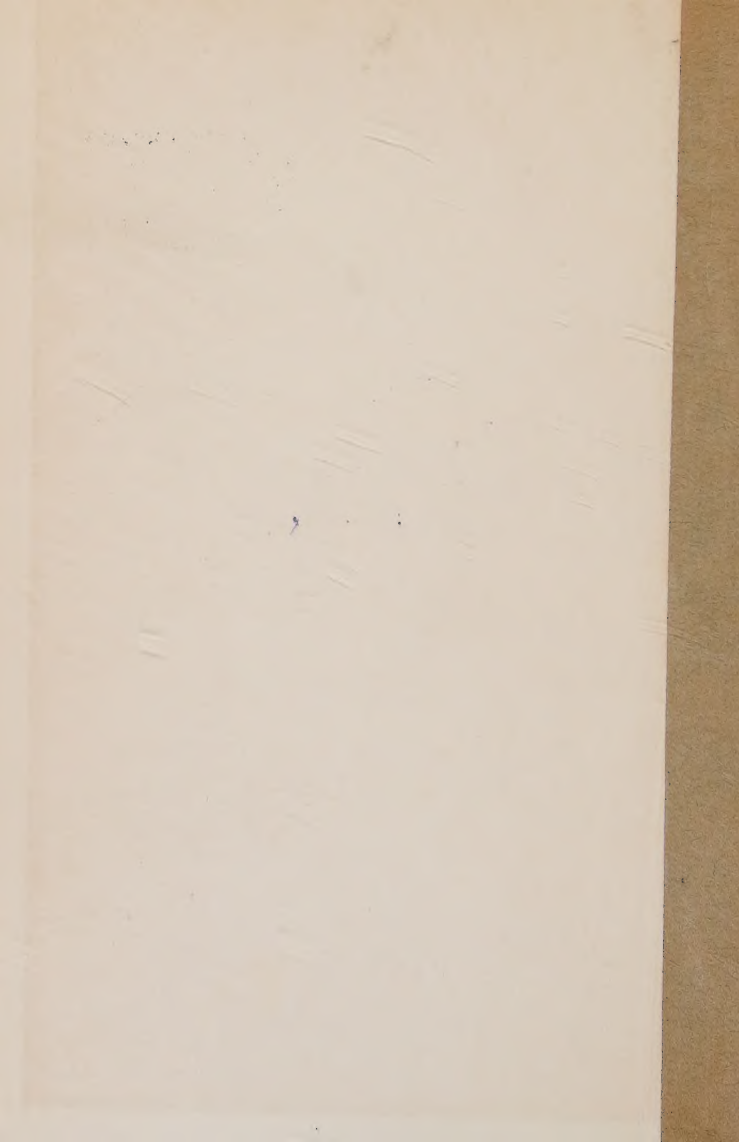




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THE AGE OF MILTON



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THE  
AGE OF MILTON

*ohw* BY *THE* *criticism* 1867-  
REV. J. HOWARD B. MASTERMAN, M.A.

SOMETIME LECTURER IN S. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, ETC., BY  
J. BASS MULLINGER, M.A.

UNIVERSITY LECTURER IN HISTORY



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## PREFACE.

THE period comprised in this volume extends from the year 1632 to the Restoration; and although, in the case of Milton, Clarendon, and a few minor writers, it has appeared necessary to give some account of literary productions belonging chronologically to the Restoration period, no attempt has been made to supply any general survey of those times, which have already been dealt with in an earlier volume of this series on *The Age of Dryden*.

The writer makes, for the most part, little claim to originality—for which, indeed, the publication of Professor Masson's *Life and Times of Milton* has left but small scope. To that work, and to not a few others dealing with the period, the author's indebtedness will be sufficiently apparent.

It has been impossible, in an introductory manual like the present, to treat at all fully of those political events with which the literary history of the period is so closely connected. Fortunately, the student who wishes to know more about these has now, in the work of Dr. S. R. Gardiner, a rich storehouse of information. The best that can be hoped of a volume of this kind is that it may excite in its readers such an interest in the period and its literature as shall lead at least some of them to the perusal of larger and more detailed works, and to an independent study of the great writers of the period.

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The writer's warmest acknowledgments are due for the advice and assistance he has received from Mr. J. Bass Mullinger, who, besides contributing an Introduction and the sections on Cowley, Hacket, Falkland, and the Cambridge Platonists, has revised the entire work both in manuscript and in proof. To the suggestions which he has offered, the writer has throughout been largely indebted. He also desires to express his thanks to Professor Hales for assistance very kindly afforded in connexion with various points.

J. HOWARD B. MASTERMAN.

DEVONPORT,

*March, 1897.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE age in which John Milton lived and wrote was one of unprecedented change and revolution. Opinion and belief, theory and practice, alike in politics, science, and theology, passed through a series of mutations with respect to which previous history and national experience afforded but little guidance and no parallel. The royal power, wielded with so much dignity by the last of the Tudors, was extinguished on the scaffold. The priestly power, albeit adorned with saintly virtues, great erudition and commanding eloquence, was overthrown and silenced. The royal heir became an exile in the Old World, a wanderer on the face of the earth. Many of the best and bravest of his father's subjects were in exile in the New World—fugitives across the ocean for faith and liberty, to raise amid virgin forests and by silent unknown rivers the temple and the psalm. At home there was everywhere strife, war, and revolution; the press teemed with controversial pamphlets; from north and south, from east and west, men hastened to decide their differences on the field of battle; while in the seats of learning ancient traditions and venerated names were repudiated and ignored, and the schismatic of yesterday appeared as the authorized instructor of to-day. We have to remember that John Milton not only witnessed all these widespread and radical changes, but that he lived to see

the new order of things itself reversed,—the throne restored, the priesthood again in honour, and learning summoning back its discarded teachers. It would be singular indeed if he himself had remained exempt from change. Imperial as was his genius, and keen as was his intellectual foresight, there is ample evidence in his own writings that his views also became modified, and reflected the vicissitudes around. The history alike of this revolution and this reaction, stands indeed recorded and mirrored in our national literature far more fully and distinctly than any previous experiences in the national life. The increased sense of power inherited from the Elizabethan era continued to stir and vivify the feelings and the imagination of the English race long after the great queen was dead. Few such striking contrasts are to be found in the literature of any nation as that presented by the tone that pervaded the writings of Englishmen in the half century preceding the reign of Elizabeth and that of the twenty years which preceded the reign of James I. In the earlier period the great majority of Englishmen still trembled at the decrees of the Vatican and the power of Spain; they were still the ‘tardy apish nation limping in base imitation’ of Italian manners and Italian models, and regarded alike by the Spaniard and the Italian with contempt, as their inferiors in statecraft, in mental power, in scholarship, and in refinement. How largely all this was changed even at the time of Spenser’s death, and still more at the time when Shakespeare died, it devolves upon other pages than these to shew.

In seeking to estimate the influences and traditions handed down to the age of Milton, we soon become aware that they must be referred to two distinct categories, according as they belong to the literature of learning or to that more popular literature in which the national tendencies are

more clearly to be discerned. The divine, the historian, the biographer, the dramatist, the poet, fall, each of them, into one or other of these two main divisions, according as each is either imitative or spontaneous,—the producer of ingenious variations on old familiar strains, or seeking to win an audience by utterances in which theme and treatment are alike new. Of the English literature of the age of Milton, it may be said that at least three-fourths of it is almost entirely imitative; of Milton himself, that in no respect is his originality more clearly to be discerned than in the manner in which (if we except his political pamphlets) his genius asserts its independence of tradition and of party. Much of the imitativeness of the literature of this time is to be referred to the fact that that literature was, either directly or indirectly, largely concerned with religious belief and consequently with tradition. It is only when we compare some of the ablest and most thoughtful theological literature of our own day with the best of Milton's age that we become aware that theology is not *all* tradition, and that around great central truths there gathers, as the ages roll on, new and loftier inspiration as amid the dissonance of Past and Present man seeks to interpret to his own soul the solemn fugue-notes of ancient Revelation. But that which chiefly serves to redeem a certain proportion of the theological literature of the seventeenth century from oblivion, is its association with the national history—with party in politics as well as in religion. Hence, indeed, much of its inspiration—its fire, its argumentative force, its eloquence—according as each writer is Roman or Protestant, Teutonic or Latin, Anglican or Puritan in his views and sympathies. At the time when Milton came up to Cambridge and studied there (1625-1632) the power of Teutonic Protestantism seemed ebbing fast. Ever since the Synod of Dort, Arminianism had been gaining ground; and its

doctrines, although they took their rise at Leyden, became in the hands of Laud and the Anglican party far more closely associated with Latin than with Teutonic habits of thought. Of the extent to which, at this period, doctrinal belief gave colour and direction to all literary effort, the present volume will afford ample evidence. Even among the brilliant circle of wits and scholars who were wont to gather at the 'Sun' or the 'Apollo' under the presiding genius of Ben Jonson—Selden, Thomas Carew, Lord Falkland, Vaughan, Sandys, Suckling, Davenant, Montague, Waller—there was scarcely one who did not at least affect an interest in and knowledge of divinity. Sandys and Carew paraphrased and versified the Psalms; Suckling, the Catullus of his time, wrote a treatise entitled *An Account of Religion by Reason*; while in his *Session of the Poets* he describes Falkland as one whose genius and attainments qualified him, in almost equal measure, to sustain the character both of the divine and of the poet. In the compositions of Crashaw, Quarles, Wither, and Henry More, the Platonist, the same influence predominates; and even in the considerable school which followed Spenser and imitated alike his thought, his fancy, and his diction, it is largely present. It was, however, Spenser in his more plaintive and solemn mood that his imitators mainly took for their model, and it is among the graver and more masculine spirits that his influence is chiefly discernible. Milton declared him 'a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas,' and the extent to which his own muse was inspired by the great teacher is well known. Not less indebted were the two Fletchers—Phineas and the younger Giles—the former the author of the *Purple Island* and styled by Quarles 'the master of this age;' the latter the author of *Christ's Victorie*, a poem which often seems a mere echo of Spenserian verse. Another imitator, himself

destined to become a model to others, was William Browne, the author of *Britannia's Pastorals*, although here the example of Du Bartas is to be seen operating yet more distinctly. But generally speaking, during the first half of the seventeenth century the genius of the author of the *Faerie Queene* is a far more potent influence in English literature than that of the author of *Hamlet*.

The influence of foreign models of thought and expression was already on the wane. Jonson, in his *Cynthia's Revels* (1600), had long ago directed his vigorous satire against the once admired diction and forced conceits of *Euphues*; while Sidney, Nash, Wither, and Drayton, following in the same track, all speak of Euphuism as already on the decline. The name of George Wither, whose memory chiefly survives as that of a composer of sacred poetry, was no less known in his own day as that of a satirist, and here again we discern the direct influence of academic training—for all the satirists of this period had studied either at Oxford or Cambridge. In his *Abuses Stript and Whipt* he inveighed against the vices and follies of the time in terms the plainness of which led to his imprisonment by the order of the Privy Council. This severity, however, only served to make his name far more widely known, and to earn for his serious poetry, and especially his metrical version of the Psalms, a popularity which those compositions would otherwise probably have failed to obtain. In his religious views, Wither inclined to Calvinism and the party of Puritanism, although the majority of the religious poets of this period appear to have belonged to the Anglican party. In all alike, however, with the splendid exception of Milton, we are struck by the morbid tendency (the outcome of the gloomy theological spirit of the age), to dwell on the more depressing aspects of human life—its vanity, its brevity, its un-

certainly, its depravity—while the lighter effusions of a different school, such as those of Bishop Corbett, possess but slender claims to rank as poetry at all.

The influence of foreign models was not only on the decline, but where still operative, often exerted itself through the medium of translations. As John Lyly had studied his model, Guevara, mainly through the twofold medium of an English translation of a French translation of the Spanish original—as Samuel Butler modelled his *Hudibras* on the lines of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which he had read probably in the version by Shelton—so the *Divine Weekes* of Du Bartas was known to most Englishmen (Milton, it would seem, included) through the medium of the English translation by Joshua Sylvester. But notwithstanding this obvious disadvantage, the poem of the chivalrous French nobleman, who had received his death-wound at Ivry, appealed with singular force to a large class of devout readers in this country. Amid much of strained metaphor, inflated diction, and occasional absurdity, Du Bartas told the story of the Creation and epitomized the Old Testament history in a manner which excited the admiration of the learned both in Oxford and Cambridge, drew praise from men of ripe discernment like Joseph Hall, Daniel and Ben Jonson, and stirred the poetic ardour of less critical youth from Spenser down to Dryden. 'Singing the mighty world's immortal story,' to quote the tribute of one of his admirers, the fervid bard himself stood dignified by his theme. On the book-shelf of many a pious Puritan household, from which writers like John Cleveland, Lovelace, and Suckling were rigorously excluded, the *Divine Weekes* became a classic. For nearly a hundred years, indeed, after the appearance of Sylvester's translation, the work occupied very much the place which the *Paradise Lost* of John Milton (in which its influence is so largely to



be discerned) has held in the libraries of educated Englishmen during the last two centuries. The chief foreign influence in English literature was, however, still the Italian, whether in Latin or in the vernacular, and to this Milton was permanently attracted. From the day when we find him borrowing from his old schoolfellow, Charles Diodati, a copy of Justiniani, the historian of Venice, down to the time of his personal intercourse with the literati of the Florentine academies and his prolonged study of the Italian classics, this influence cast a powerful spell over his fancy and his thought. In relation to the national literature at large, it now gradually declined, until superseded by the taste for French models formed by the royalist exiles in France.

But besides the influences which thus strongly affected the tone and direction of the national literature, there were those which almost equally affected literary method. As the educated Englishman of those days had generally received his mental training either at Oxford or at Cambridge, his conceptions of exposition and argument were inevitably largely formed by the system of study that there prevailed. That system operated chiefly through its logic and its rhetoric, through the habits of thought induced by the logical training of the disputations in the schools, and through the rhetorical training of the declamation in the college chapel. It is the former of these—the logical training—that serves to render so much of the theological literature, and especially the controversial literature, of the seventeenth century so distasteful to the ordinary reader of the present day. An artificial terminology, a prescribed method in all argumentation, cramped while it sharpened every intellect; while those who sought to rest their reasoning on broader grounds and to propound views not easily reducible to the terms of a technical

logic found themselves ruled out of court,—much as a *nisi prius* lawyer who, in conducting a case, should endeavour to introduce considerations irrelevant to the exact legal issue. If we turn the pages of two of the treatises which most stirred the minds of Protestant Europe in the seventeenth century—the *Appello Cesarem* of Richard Montague, which appeared in 1626, and the *Variations* of Bossuet, which appeared in 1688—we see how the treatment of controversy, even in the hands of masters of the art, was thus cribbed, cabined and confined.

The rhetorical exercises were of the same character. Forced analogies, quaint similes, fanciful illustration, the whole constituting a kind of intellectual legerdemain, were made to do duty for genuine research and solid argument. It is only when we peruse some of the surviving specimens of this perverted ingenuity that we fully realize the inestimable service rendered by Bacon's *Novum Organum*, put forward as 'the science of a better and more perfect use of reason in the investigation of things and of the true aids of the understanding.' So directly indeed did the Baconian philosophy come in collision with the academic methods of Milton's time, that one of the poet's most distinguished Cambridge contemporaries, Dr. Samuel Collins, the Provost of King's College, declared after reading the *Advancement of Learning*, that 'he found himself in a case to begin his studies anew, and that he had lost all the time of his studying before.'

It attests the native power and superiority of Milton's genius that he was able almost entirely to liberate himself from fetters which still so largely trammelled alike the poetry and the prose literature of his age. Of this his *Lycidas* supplies a striking illustration—a strain of exquisite pathos and beauty rising up amid the forced and jejune conceits which characterize the verses of his fellow



mourners, much like the voice of the lady in his *Comus* amid the cries of the wanton revellers around her. In his *Areopagitica* Milton seems himself carried away by this native spirit of independence; and his utterances, noble as is the spirit by which they are dictated, cannot be vindicated from the reproach of neglecting both the historical evidence and the general principles necessary to an adequate conduct of the argument.

John Milton saw his countrymen set forth for America and his sympathy went with them. Generally speaking, no stronger contrast could well be found than that presented by the exiles in the New World and the exiles in the Old. But even across the Atlantic the traditions of an academic education often survived, and verses fraught with fantastic imagery and forced analogies (appearing mostly at funerals and on tombstones), formed the counterpart of the *jeux d'esprit* of the cavaliers at home. It is touching to note stern Puritans like Peter Bulkley, John Wilson (the first pastor of Boston), John Cotton, and Ann Bradstreet, beguiling the lonely hours amid the wild surroundings of their new life with such effusions—the faint echoes of the culture and the associations of their distant fatherland. But unfortunately while the great poets and dramatists from Shakespeare to Shirley were tabooed, it was from writers like Wither, Quarles, and Du Bartas that America's first poets, if we allow them the name, derived their inspiration.

Estimated simply from the standpoint of literary excellence, this early literature of the New World certainly cannot compare with that which, under the influence of the new school now in course of formation in France, began with the Restoration to appear in England. Of this school, Charles Cotton, the translator of Montaigne and Corneille, affords one of the earliest instances. The taste which he

had acquired for these models of thought and expression had been gained chiefly as a traveller; but Cowley, Crashaw, Denham, Roscommon, Waller, and others, were all resident for longer or shorter periods in France as exiles; while Wycherley is said to have been sent by his father to live there in order to preserve him from Puritan influences. Corneille, Molière, and Boileau became their models; and in some cases a slavish admiration for these writers appears to have resulted in something like contempt for their native English. But affectation of this kind was limited to that narrow circle in whose compositions we discern the inferiority which almost invariably distinguishes the work of the imitator from his original—correctness passing into tameness, ingenuity into forced conceits, and elegance into insipidity. And notwithstanding the defects which undoubtedly characterize this English school fashioning itself on the literature across the Channel, it is only when we turn to that other literature, rising at nearly the same time across the Atlantic, that we become fully aware of how much of culture, of inspiration, and of power the Puritan who aspired to literary excellence had either voluntarily debarred himself or became by the mere conditions of exile deprived. In Cowley's exquisite *Hymn to Light* we have a striking illustration of a world of delight and æsthetic feeling from which the Puritan stood alike by principle and sympathy altogether excluded. As the glow of national pride and exultation that characterized the later years of Elizabeth's reign grew faint amid the sense of national disaster and humiliation resulting from the Civil War, its place as an inspiration was in some measure supplied by that new sense of advancing knowledge, of triumphs won by the achievements of science in a less perishable domain, which was destined not merely to restore to England her ancient fame but widely to

extend her material power. The many followed whither the master spirits led. The study of Nature, in its varied fields of investigation, became not only a widely extended pursuit but a fashion. And the affectation of theological learning which characterized the scholars and the wits of the reign of Charles the First was succeeded by the affectation of scientific tastes on the part of the divines and statesmen of the days of Charles the Second.

J. B. M.



# THE AGE OF MILTON.

## CHAPTER I.

### MILTON'S EARLY LIFE AND POEMS.

MILTON'S works in prose and verse fall into three groups, corresponding to three clearly marked periods of his life. The first of these—the period of *L'Allegro*, *Comus* and *Lycidas*—ends with the return of the poet from Italy in 1639, and the composition of the *Epitaphium Damonis*; the second is the period of his political activity and controversial prose writings; the third comprises the last fifteen years of his life, and his three great masterpieces—*Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*.

During the first of these periods, with which we have now to deal, the predominating influence over his mind was that of Spenser. The great poem to which he looked forward, and for which he was deliberately fitting himself during these years, was to be an allegorical romance, more majestic perhaps, and charged with deeper meaning than the *Faerie Queene*, but moving through the same scenes of chivalrous emprise and full of the same delicate sweetness.

The task remained unfulfilled till the poet emerged, sterner and stronger, from the turmoil and conflict of the succeeding period; but the poems that belong to these years suffice to prove how the disciple of Spenser might

have equalled, or even surpassed, his master, if a few more years of peaceful life at Horton had afforded him the opportunity. A second *Faerie Queene* by the author of *Lycidas* would be an almost priceless treasure, but it would have been too dearly purchased at the price of *Paradise Lost*.

Milton's early life was uneventful. He was born on the 9th of December, 1608, in Bread Street, London, where his father, John Milton, carried on the business of a scrivener. This John Milton had come to London from his home near Oxford some twenty years before, having been disinherited by his father, Richard Milton, a sturdy adherent of the old faith, for joining the Anglican Church. We know him as a prosperous London citizen, a man of culture and a musician of no mean ability. Puritanism already had its stronghold in the homes of the citizens of London, and a reverent seriousness, which had in it nothing of moroseness or gloom, coloured the home-life of Milton's childhood. Of his early education, he says: "I had, from my first years, by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father (whom God recompense!) been exercised to the tongues and some sciences, as my age would suffer, by sundry masters and teachers, both at home and at the schools."

The scrivener seems to have recognized from the first the exceptional ability of his eldest son, and to have spared neither pains nor money to secure for him a careful and thorough education. His earliest tutor was Thomas Young, a Scotch Presbyterian minister, who afterwards became Master of Jesus College, Cambridge. At the age of twelve he was sent to St. Paul's School, where he formed the only close friendship of his life with Charles Diodati, the son of an Italian physician who had married an English wife and settled in London. Milton and Diodati remained loyal and devoted friends long after their school-days were over,

corresponding frequently in Latin verse and English prose; and the magnificent Latin elegy which the poet laid upon the tomb of his friend in 1639 closes one of the happiest chapters in the history of great friendships.

Next to the Bible, the Authorized Version of which was published only three years after Milton's birth, the most frequent companions of his childhood among books must have been Spenser and Du Bartas. Spenser had already won that high place among English poets from which he has never since been dethroned, and had become the father of a school of pastoral poets, of which the two Fletchers and William Browne were the most distinguished representatives. Du Bartas has not shared Spenser's immortality; but few books have won a wider popularity than Sylvester's translation obtained in the Puritan homes of England. The author, a French Huguenot who had fought for Henry of Navarre, left behind him at his death, in 1590, a long descriptive poem entitled *The Divine Weeks and Works*. The first part, which alone was complete, gave an account of the days of the Creation, founded on the biblical record; and the second 'week' carried on the Scripture story to the reign of David, where it abruptly terminated. This poem was translated into English by Joshua Sylvester, himself a poet of some ability, in 1605, and passed through several editions in rapid succession. Its scriptural basis secured for it a welcome in Puritan households, and as the publisher's office was in Bread Street, an early copy would certainly find its way to the Spread Eagle. Sylvester's uncouth imagery and quaintly-structured verse is not without a certain attractiveness even now, but they have a higher claim to remembrance as an influence of Milton's childhood, out of which was destined to grow, in the fulness of time, *Paradise Lost*.

In 1625 Milton entered Christ's College, Cambridge,

where he spent the next seven years. Although he appears to have chafed somewhat under the restraints of academic discipline, and to have been hindered by his natural reserve from sharing freely in the life of the college, he seems, after a time, to have won the respect of many for whose friendship he did not ask, and to have gained a high reputation both for intellectual ability and moral purity. He spoke afterwards of "that more than ordinary respect which I found above many of my equals at the hands of those courteous and learned men, the fellows of that college wherein I spent seven years." But such measure of affection as Milton felt for his university—and it was not very deep—did not prevent him from writing in strong disapproval of the methods of education in use there. The dissatisfaction he afterwards expressed with his own university career may perhaps have been partly due to political prejudice, but it was certainly with very little regret that he said farewell to the university in 1632, and retired to the peaceful seclusion of Horton.

Among his contemporaries at Cambridge were several destined to high place in the literary history of the period. The year after he entered at Christ's, the name of Jeremy Taylor appears among the entries at Caius College; and in the following year John Cleveland came up to Christ's, while George Herbert, resigning the office of Public Orator, which he had held for six years, went down to enter upon the pastoral care of his church at Leighton. In Milton's last year there appear several entries of note—Richard Crashaw at Pembroke College, Cudworth and Worthington at Emmanuel, and Henry More at Christ's. There is no proof that Milton ever came into contact with any of these with some of whom he would certainly have had much in common.

When he left Cambridge in 1632 he had written



twelve poems in English and about the same number in Latin. His earliest verses are paraphrases of Psalms cxiv and cxxxvi, notable as the work of a boy of fifteen, and showing clear traces of the influence of Sylvester's *Du Bartas*. A little poem written two years later *On the Death of a Faire Infant dying of a Cough* shows considerable promise. The verses entitled *At a Vacation Exercise in the College*, composed in 1628, and the two elegies on Hobson, the university carrier, which belong to the same period, are of interest as Milton's only attempts at a lighter vein of poetry—attempts which his lack of any sense of humour rendered only moderately successful. His *Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester*, who died in 1631, though poor as a whole, has some lines not unworthy of the poet. The three remaining poems that belong to this period require more detailed notice. The first of these, both in order of date and of importance, is the *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, the date of which a letter to Diodati fixes as Christmas, 1629. The poet is represented as waking on the Christmas morn and recalling the sacred association of the day. Moved by these, he resolves to forestall the 'star-led wizards' with a 'humble Ode.' These introductory stanzas are in the same metre as Spenser's *Four Hymnes*, with the addition of an alexandrine at the end; but the metre of the hymn itself seems to be Milton's own invention. It is notable chiefly for the concluding alexandrine, which gives a sonorous roll to the end of each verse. In sublimity of thought and splendour of imagery the hymn resembles Milton's later poems more closely than any other of his earlier verses. The Earth is the scene of a great conflict between the forces of good and evil; vast and shadowy deities sink into darkness, and angels descend to serve the infant king. This ode has received high praise from

Hallam, who says that it is 'perhaps the finest in the English language,' while Landor says of the earlier stanzas, 'I think it incomparably the noblest piece of lyric poetry in any modern language I am conversant with.' Its elevation of thought and grandeur of conception cannot indeed be denied, but it shows too evident signs of conscious elaboration to reach the highest standard of lyrical excellence. Its conceits and alliterative effects sometimes verge on the fantastic, and remind us of the far-fetched imagery of the so-called 'metaphysical school.' The almost grotesque description of sunrise for example :

' So, when the sun in bed,  
Curtained with cloudy red,  
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave—'

might have been written by Crashaw or Donne. That Milton should have failed at once to rise superior to these influences, which were paramount among almost all the poets of his age, is not surprising; we are rather surprised to find how speedily and completely he emancipated himself from them. The only compositions written after this time, in which the influence of the fantastic conceits of contemporary poetry are discernible, are his two earliest sonnets.

To the following year belongs the so-called *Sonnet on Shakespeare*, which Mr. Masson conjectures, with some probability, to have been written on a blank page of a copy of the first folio edition of Shakespeare's collected works, which was published in 1623. As a tribute to England's greatest poet by one destined to hold the second place, the lines have a special interest. They were the first of Milton's English verses to be published; for in 1632 a second folio edition of Shakespeare was issued, with the commendatory introductions which had prefaced the

first folio edition, including Ben Jonson's generous tribute 'To the Memory of my Beloved the Author Mr. William Shakespeare, and what he hath left us ;' and with three new sets of verses, one of which was Milton's. Here are the lines exactly as they were published, anonymously, in 1632.

AN EPITAPH ON THE ADMIRABLE DRAMATICKE POET  
W. SHAKESPEARE.

'What needs my Shakespeare for his honour'd bones,  
The labour of an Age, in piled stones,  
Or that his hallow'd Reliques should be hid  
Under a starre-ypointing Pyramid ?  
Deare Sonne of Memory, great Heire of Fame,  
What need'st thou such dull witnesse to thy Name ?  
Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
Hast built thyselfe a lasting monument.  
For whilst to the shame of slow-endeavouring Art  
Thy easie numbers flow ; and that each heart  
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued Booke  
Those Delphicke lines with deep impression tooke ;  
Then thou, our fancy of herselfe bereaving,  
Dost make us Marble with too much conceiving,  
And so Sepulchred in such pompe doth lie  
That Kings for such a Tombe would wish to die.'

Judged as a poem the epitaph is stronger in conception than in execution, for it has neither the sonorous roll of some of Milton's later sonnets nor the gentle sweetness of the verses of his Horton period. But it is 'touched with the hand of a true poet,' and for all such, and many never to be such, Ben Jonson held court at the famous Devil Tavern, where the Apollo Club kept up lingering traditions of the far more illustrious days of the 'Mermaid.' Whether Ben, great even in the grossness and decadence of his declining years, ever met, or tried to meet, the young Cambridge scholar whose tribute to his friend he must

have read—this we shall never know. But we do know, beyond all doubt, that in the uproarious company of wits that met at the ‘Oracle of Apollo’ Milton would not have found congenial society. There is a school of poetry that can flourish under the care of Bacchus, Erato, or Venus; but the poet who would sing of war and heroes, of the decrees of the gods, and the mysteries of the unseen world—such an one must qualify himself by rigid self-discipline, must walk white-robed and unstained through quiet places :

‘All as when thou, white-robed, and lustrous with waters of  
cleansing,  
Risest, augur, erect, facing the frown of the gods.’

Thus had Milton written in 1629 to Diodati, clothing his thoughts in Latin elegiac verse; and an ideal such as this—the joint product of a Puritan childhood and a youth spent among classical authors—severed him by a well-nigh impassable gulf from the verse writers of the ‘Apollo.’ The plan foreshadowed in these verses to Diodati grew more definite as Milton’s university career neared its close. Meanwhile the apparent aimlessness of his life, seemingly devoted to study for no definite purpose, drew from one of his friends the kindly remonstrance which gave the occasion for the last poem belonging to his Cambridge life.

It had originally been intended by his parents that he should take holy orders, but he now felt reluctant to commit himself to the service of a Church in which the rod of discipline seemed to be swallowing all the other rods. The influence of Laud was already permeating the English Church, and the religious opinions of Laud were not those to which Milton’s early training had fitted him to assent. Mingled with this reluctance there was

the consciousness that his views were immature, and his path not yet clear enough before him to allow of any irrevocable step forward. And this feeling he communicates to his friend in a "Petrarchian Stanza" recently composed on his twenty-third birthday. Here is the sonnet in full :

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED TO THE AGE OF TWENTY-THREE.

'How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,  
 Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year !  
 My hasting days fly on with full career,  
 But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.  
 Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,  
 That I to manhood am arrived so near ;  
 And inward ripeness doth much less appear,  
 That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.  
 Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,  
 It shall be still in strictest measure even  
 To that same lot, however mean or high,  
 Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven ;  
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,  
 As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.'

This is a noble assertion of the standpoint of Puritanism at its best—Puritanism as an influence working on a character that combined in unusual degree sensitiveness to external impressions with fixed self-reliance of purpose. Milton feels like his own Samson :

'Some rousing motions in me, which dispose  
 To something extraordinary my thoughts.  
 I with this messenger will go along,  
 Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonour  
 Our law, or stain my vow.'

His other early sonnet, *To a Nightingale*, probably belongs either to the close of his university life, or to the earlier years of his life at Horton. In both he has fol-

lowed, more closely than his immediate predecessors, the Italian models of Petrarch.

But it was not only to his friends that Milton found it necessary to justify a resolve that seemed opposed both to common sense and right feeling. We may conjecture that even the affectionate confidence of his father was not a little strained by his son's deliberate determination to adopt no profession or business except that of self-culture. But the record of the victory of the Muses remains to us in a Latin poem, *Ad Patrem*, written about this time. In this poem, which is of considerable length, Milton gratefully acknowledges the generosity of his father, who had forced him neither into business nor profession, but allowed him to devote himself to the service of Apollo. Here are the closing lines, quoted from Cowper's translation :

‘ But thou, my Father ! since to render thanks  
Equivalent, and to requite by deeds  
Thy liberality, exceeds my power,  
Suffice it, that I thus record thy gifts  
And bear them treasured in a grateful mind !  
Ye too, the favourite pastime of my youth,  
My voluntary numbers, if ye dare  
To hope longevity, and to survive  
Your master's funeral, not soon absorb'd  
In the oblivious Lethæan gulf,  
Shall to futurity perhaps convey  
This theme, and by these praises of my Sire  
Improve the Fathers of a distant age ! ’

So it was decided that Milton should take up his residence at Horton, the little Buckinghamshire village, whither the scrivener had retired on a competent income, and there devote himself to self-culture and preparation for the great task which was even now slowly growing more concrete before him.

Five uneventful years were spent at Horton in carefully

organized study. The wide range of Milton's reading during these years is attested by a recently discovered Commonplace Book, containing notes and extracts from no less than eighty authors—Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and English—chiefly on historical subjects. Except for occasional visits to London to learn music, he seems to have seldom wandered from his quiet country home. The literary world of London would have few attractions for him. Poetry, in the graceful but sensual lyrics of Carew or Suckling, was no longer the expression of life; while the dramas of Shirley, or even Massinger, had little of the strong and virile sense of reality of the dramatic masterpieces of the Elizabethan age. The touch of decay, subtle but strong, lay on the literature of the time, and on the age that approved and accepted it. Political life was for a time, dormant, or at least inarticulate. Puritan London had many things to say and to do, and in the saying and doing of them the recluse of Horton was to play a man's part, but the time was not yet. Meanwhile religious controversies were fast growing in bitterness, and murmurs of the discontent with which moderate men saw the tightening of Laud's grip over ecclesiastical affairs must have disturbed even the quiet life of Milton's village home. Milton heard them; and his broodings over them colour the plot of *Comus*, and break into thunder in the elegy of *Lycidas*.

The years of preparation were not unproductive. Small in bulk as is the verse belonging to this period, it is on the very highest level of poetic excellence. Any one of the four chief poems of these years would have sufficed to place Milton in the front rank of English poets, and even from the more splendid and majestic grandeur of the later poems we turn with a feeling almost of relief to the gentler and happier music of *L'Allegro* or *Comus*



The date of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* is uncertain, but internal evidence seems to indicate the earlier years of Milton's life at Horton. They are full of just that kind of charm that country scenes and occupations have for those who come to them fresh from the life of towns and books. The germ of *Il Penseroso* may perhaps be found in a song in John Fletcher's play, *The Nice Valour*, or in the introductory verses of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*; but the development bears unmistakeable traces of days at Horton. The two poems are not so much antithetical as complementary of each other. *L'Allegro* opens with a spring morning, with the sound of country life waking the poet and calling him forth to share the happiness of rustic labour or sport, idealized by his poetic fancy. Then evening comes, and the delights of romance or drama, and music lulling to repose. *Il Penseroso* opens with an autumn evening, when the corn is cut and the nightingale has fled, with the embers glowing through the room, teaching "light to counterfeit a gloom." The vigil of the student, deep in the lore of Plato, or spell-bound over some gorgeous tragedy, is followed by a gusty and showery morning, by noonday slumber, and by evensong in some great cathedral, where organ and choir combine to "bring all Heaven before the eyes" of the poet as he listens.

The happiness of *L'Allegro* is as far removed from the boisterous gaiety of the Cavalier gallant, as is the more sober contemplative life of *Il Penseroso* from the moroseness of the extreme Puritan. Both are unmistakeably Milton, in different moods. It is Milton who flings open the casement of the old house at Horton to hear the, as yet, unfamiliar sounds of the farm, perhaps mistaking for swallows the sparrows that chirped on the eaves. It is he who wanders forth to see the commonplace life of a



Buckinghamshire village, clothed in the glamour of pastoral fancies caught from Vergil or Spenser, and who returns at evening to pore over some old romance,

‘Where throngs of Knights and Barons bold  
In weeds of peace, high triumphs hold,’

or catch again the ‘warbled woodnotes’ of the *Midsummer Night’s Dream*. No less clearly, it is Milton who, from moonlit strays along the hedgerows, returns to those studies which even in his childhood often lasted far into the night. In the closing lines :

‘But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloister’s pale,  
And love the high embowèd roof,  
With antique pillars massy-proof,  
And storied windows richly dight,  
Casting a dim religious light’—

it is difficult to avoid seeing a reference to evenings at King’s College Chapel, Cambridge, or in S. Paul’s Cathedral. Not long was Milton destined to cherish such kindly thoughts of the church of his childhood ; but the Puritan opinions of maturer years never destroyed in him the Catholic feeling of sensuous worship as the expression of spiritual communion.

It is hard to praise what all men have praised without falling into hyperbole or platitude. All lovers of poetry will echo Landor’s words: ‘Whenever I come to the end of these poems, or either of them, it is always with a sigh of regret.’ In no other compositions of equal length in our language have later poets found such a storehouse of images and phrases—many of them gathered by Milton himself from writers of the preceding period.

Of the two chief blemishes of the *Ode on the Nativity*—conscious effort and fantastic imagery—there is no trace

in these poems. As far as we know, they were, unlike *Lycidas* and *Comus*, spontaneous expressions of poetic feeling, prompted by no external influence. Among contemporary poets Herrick alone sings of fields and woods and village sports with something of the same abandon and freshness; but Herrick passed to the retirement of a Devonshire village, not from years of study, but from years of indulgence, if not of debauchery, among the wits of the 'Apollo.' 'He who would write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem.' So Milton wrote; and the distance between *Il Penseroso* and the best of Herrick's lyrics is the measure of his faithfulness to his ideal.

*Arcades*—'*Part of an Entertainment presented to the Countess Dowager of Derby at Harefield by some Noble Persons of her family*'—is a fragment in the form of a dramatic pastoral. The Countess of Derby, to whom Spenser had dedicated his *Tears of the Muses* in 1591, had been a munificent patron of the poets, and was now one of the few remaining links with the Elizabethan age. Milton's share in the masque, with which the members of her family celebrated some birthday or other anniversary of the aged Countess, was no doubt due to Henry Lawes, the well-known musician, who provided the music and supervised the performance. *Arcades* opens with a song in praise of the Countess, after which the Genius of the wood appears, and in a speech of some sixty lines extols her virtues and splendour. Then follow two short songs, which bring the performance to a close. The drama is too fragmentary and too occasional to give adequate scope to Milton's powers. It is chiefly interesting as the prelude to *Comus*, which belongs to the autumn of 1634.

The masque, which had been introduced into England from Italian sources early in the sixteenth century, reached

the height of its popularity under James I., when Ben Jonson took undisputed precedence as a writer of these compositions. In spite of his vigorous protests, the words of the masque gradually became subordinate to music and scenery, while the costliness of the displays became a serious hindrance to their production. But in 1634 the publication of Prynne's celebrated attack on plays and players—his *Histrionomastix*—gave a temporary stimulus to such performances. In that year the Inns of Court produced, at a cost exceeding £21,000, Shirley's *Triumph of Peace*. The Court, not to be outdone, spent an almost equally large amount in the performance of Carew's *Cælum Britannicum*, in which the king took part.

In the autumn of the same year the Earl of Bridgewater, about to take up his residence at Ludlow Castle, as Lord Lieutenant of the Welsh Marches, determined to celebrate the occasion with a dramatic performance. Henry Lawes was music-master to the Bridgewater family, and to him the Earl would naturally apply for a masque suitable for the occasion. Lawes, who had known Milton from childhood, and had already collaborated with him in the preparation of *Arcades*, now secured his assistance in this larger work, and on Michaelmas night, 1634, *Comus* was produced. Of the immediate impression made by the masque there is no record; but we know that Lawes was so pressed for copies of it, that two years later he published an edition in quarto to save the labour of frequent transcription. Milton's name was not on the title page, but the motto that appeared in its place:

‘Eheu! quid volui misero mihi! floribus Austrum  
Perditus’—

could have been added by no other hand than his, and expresses his perhaps reluctant consent to its publication.

It detracts but little from the originality of *Comus* that Milton borrowed the plot in its main outline from George Peele's *Old Wives' Tale* (published in 1595); or that *Comus* appears in Ben Jonson's *Pleasure reconciled to Virtue* as the name of a sordid and gluttonous incarnation of appetite; and in a Latin play by a Dutch writer, Erycius Puteanus as the name of a more delicately sensual spirit. To this Latin play, which was republished at Oxford in 1634, Milton no doubt owed the name, and some touches in the character of his *Comus*. To John Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess* and to the *Odyssey* his indebtedness is no less clear. But, essentially, the originality of *Comus* remains indisputable. It stands as high above all the other masques of the period as *Il Penseroso* among descriptive poems or *Lycidas* among elegies.

Judged simply as a masque, *Comus* is perhaps inferior to some of Ben Jonson's. It is overweighted with moral teaching and lacks the lightening influence of humour. But Milton's genius overflowed the limits of its appointed task, and *Comus* remains a splendid protest, at an hour when such a protest was needed the most, on behalf of a reasonable life. For if *Comus* is the expression of the distaste with which Milton regarded the growing licence of Cavalier society, its production is no less clearly a repudiation of the doctrines of Prynne and the moroser Puritans, to whom the drama was an unholy thing.

The masque opens with a speech by the attendant spirit, who descends from the Court of Jove, and explains that 'a noble Peer of mickle trust and power' has been commissioned by Neptune to rule over the Welsh Marches, and that his children:

'Are coming to attend their father's state  
And new-intrusted sceptre. But their way  
Lies through the perplexed paths of this drear wood,

The nodding horror of whose shady brows  
Threats the forlorn and wandering passenger,  
And here their tender age might suffer peril  
But that, by quick command of Sovran Jove,  
I was dispatched for their defence and guard.'

Then follows a description of the strange enchanter, Comus, son of Bacchus and Circe, who, having 'roved the Celtic and Iberian fields,' has at length betaken himself to this wood, and there works his evil enchantments, offering to each weary traveller who passes that way a draught with deadly power to make bestial both the countenance and the mind of men :

'And they, so perfect is their misery,  
Not once perceive their foul disfigurement,  
But boast themselves more comely than before,  
And all their friends and native home forget,  
To roll with pleasure in a sensual sty.'

From this danger it is his mission, disguised as a shepherd, to guard the children as they pass through the wood.

After this prologue the spirit vanishes, and Comus and his rout of bestial followers burst in, singing of the joys of lust and drunken revelry. Their orgies are checked by the sound of approaching footsteps, and Comus dismisses his train, and throws magic dust into the air to deceive the lady, who now enters seeking for her brothers, whom she has lost in the wood. Her song—'Sweet Echo! sweetest Nymph that liv'st unseen'—is followed by the appearance of Comus, disguised as a shepherd, who offers to guide her to a 'low but loyal cottage' where she may rest. They go out, and the two brothers enter, looking for their sister. In a dialogue they set forth the excellence of virtue and the power of chastity, in language which, though noble in itself, is wholly unsuited to the age of the speakers. But

throughout the masque Milton sets dramatic propriety wholly at defiance, and his characters become merely vehicles for the expression of his thoughts. The conversation is interrupted by the appearance of the attendant Spirit, who tells them of their sister's danger, and gives them a magic herb, Hæmony, provided with which they may safely defy the enchanter.

The scene then changes to a stately palace, where the lady, spell-bound in an enchanted chair, but strong in the power of innocence and purity, reasons with and defies her captor. The whole of the dialogue between Comus and his intended victim is magnificent, the closing words of defiance rising to a height of passionate intensity rare even in Milton :

‘ Nature’s full blessings should be well dispensed  
In unsuperfluous even proportion,  
And she no whit incumber’d with her store ;  
And then the giver would be better thank’d,  
His praise due paid ; for swinish gluttony  
Ne’er looks to Heaven amidst his gorgeous feast,  
But with besotted base ingratitude  
Crams, and blasphemes his feeder. Shall I go on ?  
Or have I said enough ? To him that dares  
Arm his profane tongue with contemptuous words  
Against the sun-clad power of chastity,  
Fain would I something say, yet to what end ?  
Thou hast nor ear nor soul to apprehend  
The sublime notion, and high mystery,  
That must be utter’d to unfold the sage  
And serious doctrine of virginity ;  
And thou art worthy that thou should’st not know  
More happiness than this thy present lot.  
Enjoy your dear wit and gay rhetoric,  
That hath so well been taught her dazzling fence ;  
Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced ;  
Yet should I try, the uncontrolled worth  
Of this pure cause would kindle my rapt spirits



To such a flame of sacred vehemence,  
 That dumb things would be moved to sympathize,  
 And the brute earth would lend her nerves, and shake,  
 Till all thy magic structures, reared so high,  
 Were shatter'd into heaps o'er thy false head.'

As Comus is making one last effort to shake the lady's constancy, the brothers rush in, dash the glass to the ground and drive out the revellers. But as the enchanter has escaped with his magic wand, the lady is still spell-bound, and in an exquisitely melodious song, Sabina, the nymph of the Severn, is invoked to liberate her. The request is granted, and the lady with her brothers follow the guidance of the Shepherd-spirit out of the enchanted wood to the castle, where they are met with rustic dances and songs of welcome. The epilogue, pronounced by the Spirit, announces his return to the abodes of the gods, and sets forth the moral of the play:

'But now my task is smoothly done,  
 I can fly, or I can run  
 Quickly to the green earth's end,  
 Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend,  
 And from thence can soar as soon  
 To the corners of the moon.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mortals that would follow me,  
 Love Virtue, she alone is free,  
 She can teach ye how to climb  
 Higher than the sphery chime;  
 Or if Virtue feeble were,  
 Heaven itself would stoop to her.'

\* \* \* \* \*

*Comus* is the first of Milton's poems where Puritanism shows clear signs of its influence. Pleasure and purity are no longer aspects of one life, they are two opposite principles in continual conflict—in conflict most of all in the

age in which Milton is writing. For Comus is unmistakably the spirit of the time—the mocking, sensual, dissolute spirit that reigned in the court of the Stuarts, where coarse jokes passed current as wit, and lewd verses as poetry. Every argument for indulgence urged by Comus may be found in the loose verses of the period, framed on the models of French or Italian love-songs. It is noteworthy that in antagonism to this spirit of the time Milton sets up, not, as in *Samson Agonistes*, the Puritan ideal of the soul strong in the sense of a divine call, but the older Spenserian ideal of purity—the purity of Una or Britomart—a purity whose beauty is even more divine than its holiness. But though Comus flies vanquished from the contest, one soul only is saved by its victory. The spirit of evil still ranges the wood of darkness to entice and destroy travellers that pass that way. The underlying thought—the individual probation of every human soul, fighting out the destiny of life alone—is the characteristic idea of Puritan literature, and at once the strength and the weakness of its theological basis. For the spirit of the time had contaminated religious as well as social life. With magic dust he had bewitched men's eyes, and transformed himself into the guise of a shepherd. Some have discerned in this magic dust a reference to a custom revived by Laud, who at the consecration of a church a few years before had 'cast dust into the air;' while the spell-bound lady, defending her purity against the seductions of the enchanter, symbolized the spirit of true religion, spell-bound but not subdued by the religious despotism of the archbishop.

✓ Three years after the date of *Comus*, Milton wrote the last English poem of this period, *Lycidas*. The occasion of the elegy was the death of Edward King, a Fellow of Christ's College, who had been drowned while crossing the Irish Channel in August, 1637. The universities of



Oxford and Cambridge were wont at this time to celebrate notable events in national or academic life by publishing collections of Latin or English eulogistic verses. Such a collection was issued in the spring of 1638 to the memory of Ben Jonson; it contained between thirty and forty elegies in English, Latin, and Greek, and among those who contributed were Lord Falkland, Waller, Cleveland, John Ford and Habington. 'The gist of all the panegyrics,' says Mr. Masson, 'various as they were in style, was that English poetry had died with Ben. The panegyrics themselves went near to prove it.'

'What the wits and scholars of England at large were doing for Ben's memory, a select number of wits and scholars, chiefly connected with Cambridge, had resolved to do for the memory of Edward King.' As a contemporary and friend of King at Christ's College, and already a poet of some note, Milton was naturally asked to contribute to the volume. The anthology was published in the spring of 1638, and consisted of twenty-three elegiac poems in Latin and Greek, and thirteen in English. Among the contributors were Henry More, Joseph Beaumont, Cleveland, and other men of note; but any lover of poetry would gladly exchange the whole collection for five lines of *Lycidas*. Plainly the elegies, Latin, Greek, and English, are the most veritable rubbish, hardly relieved by a single poetic thought. But last of the English poems comes *Lycidas* by J. M., a garden of magic beauty in a sterile land.

'In *Lycidas* we have reached the high water mark of English poesy,' says Mr. Pattison, and all who love true poetry will pardon the hyperbole. In its imagery and arrangement the poem conforms to the pastoral models of Theocritus and Virgil, which the Italian Renaissance poets had revived, and Spenser had introduced into England. It conforms also to mediæval models, consciously or un-

consciously, in combining realism and idealism, Paganism and Christianity, with no sense of incongruity. Thus in an elegy which opens with an invocation to the Muses who dwell by the well that springs beneath the seat of Jove, we hear the 'dread voice' of the 'Pilot of the Galilean Lake,' and Lycidas is at once a shepherd of bucolic Arcadia and a type of the true pastors of the Christian Church, just as the god Pan, in mediæval legend, sometimes represents the Christ.

There is no reason to believe that Milton had been a close friend of the young scholar whose death he laments, and there is nothing in *Lycidas* of that keen and subduing sense of personal loss which softens into delicate and tender pathos in the *Epitaphium Damonis*. A poet writing under a strong sense of bereavement would scarcely throw the main stress of his passion into a denunciation of Church abuses, only remotely connected with the subject of his lament.

Taken apart from its context, the passage in question is a noble expression of the feeling which, pent up as yet, was destined soon to break out with the force of a resistless torrent. It was one of the unfortunate results of Laud's reliance on secular authority for the enforcement of religious uniformity, that the so-called Arminian party soon came to include in its ranks all those clergy who were willing to subordinate principle to self-interest, and 'scramble at the shearer's feast.' And thus what was good in the movement grew to be associated with so much that was undoubtedly and even repulsively evil, that men like Milton were driven more and more into active opposition to the whole episcopal system.

The poem, after an invocation to the Muses, recounts how Lycidas and his fellow shepherd had fed their flocks and piped their rural ditties together.

‘But Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,’ and all nature is mourning for him. Then follow the noble and familiar lines recalling the resolve of the earlier sonnet :

‘Alas ! what boots it with incessant care  
To tend the homely slighted shepherd’s trade,  
And strictly meditate the thankless muse ?  
Were it not better done as others use,  
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neaera’s hair ?  
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights, and live laborious days ;  
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with th’ abhorred shears,  
And slits the thin spun life. “ But not the praise,”  
Phœbus replied, and touch’d my trembling ears ;  
“ Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistening foil  
Set off to th’ world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove ;  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.” ’

After Father Camus and the Pilot of the Galilean Lake have in turn lamented the dead, the Sicilian Muse returns, laden with wealth of flowers to strew the hearse of him whose soul has passed to Elysian fields :

‘There entertain him all the saints above,  
In solemn troops, and sweet societies,  
That sing, and singing in their glory, move,  
And wipe the tears for ever from his eyes.  
Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more ;  
Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore,  
In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
To all that wander in that perilous flood.

Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,

While the still morn went out with sandals gray,  
 He touch'd the tender stops of various quills,  
 With eager thought warbling his Doric lay ;  
 And now the sun had stretch'd out all the hills,  
 And now was dropt into the western bay ;  
 At last he rose, and twitch'd his mantle blue :  
 To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.'

*Lycidas* is the elegy of much more than Edward King ; it is the last note of the inspiration of an age that was passing away. It is redolent of the 'sweet mournfulness of the Spenserian time, upon whose joys Death is the only intruder.' No such elegy was to adorn our English literature until, two hundred years after, Shelley and Matthew Arnold produced the two elegiac poems which alone in our language deserve to rank with Milton's—for the wider scope of *In Memoriam* removes it from this category. *Thyrsis* excels *Lycidas* in the expression of chastened sorrow and tender recollection, but Matthew Arnold loved Clough and Oxford as Milton never loved King or Cambridge. *Adonais* is charged with deeper thought and more harmonious passion ; but both owe to *Lycidas* a debt which *Lycidas* owes to no other poem.

By the time that this poem was published, Milton had started on his tour of foreign travel. The circumscribed life at Horton had been gradually proving distasteful to him, and the death of his mother in 1637, and the marriage of his younger brother, who settled with his bride at Horton, left Milton more free to follow the instinct that called him to 'see the world.' For some years he had been a diligent student of the masterpieces of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, and Ariosto, and his friendship with Diodati must have given to Italy a special interest for him.

Italy was at the time of Milton's visit still the centre of European art and thought. Though her towns had lost their freedom and her literature its freshness and virility,

though the Renaissance had spent its force as an inspiring influence, and had made men sceptical in religion and pagan in morals; yet the memories and traditions of the great age that had passed still lingered among the poets and thinkers of Florence and Rome, who welcomed the young Englishman with panegyrics which, though almost ludicrously exaggerated, were no doubt the expression of genuine regard.

At Florence, Rome, Naples and elsewhere Milton's introductions secured for him the friendship of the men best worth knowing. At Rome he heard the famous singer Leonora Baroni, to whom he penned three graceful Latin epigrams; at Naples he was the guest of the Marquis Manso, the friend and protector of Tasso and Marini, and almost the last survivor of the great age of Italian literature. One of the best of Milton's Latin poems was addressed to Manso on his departure—a generous tribute to the veteran who had been the defender of the Muses of Italy, and a not less generous vindication of the claim of England to be numbered among the lands on which Phœbus smiles, and in which the Muses dwell. After visiting Galileo at Florence, and undergoing some annoyance from the Jesuits on account of his own outspoken Protestant opinions, Milton turned homeward, called from a projected extension of his tour by the imperious voice of duty. 'While I was desirous,' he writes, 'to cross into Sicily and Greece, the sad news of civil war in England called me back; for I considered it base that, while my fellow countrymen were fighting at home for liberty, I should be travelling abroad at ease for intellectual culture.'

Among the reminiscences of the Italian tour, which thus came prematurely to a close, are a group of six Italian sonnets, addressed to a lady in Bologna—'the grassy vale through which the Reno strays'—whose charms had

captivated the young Englishman. Of the occasion of their composition nothing is known. They may have been only experiments in Italian verse, but it seems more probable that they were addressed to some lady whom Milton had met on his travels. A reader of contemporary Italian verse will know how to estimate the value of these adulatory expressions of undying affection, and will see in them no evidence either of honorable passion or amorous intrigue.

The shadow of a great sorrow darkened Milton's return, and for a time withdrew his thoughts from the political contest which had called him back. Charles Diodati, his only close friend, had died while he was in Italy, and one of Milton's first acts was to lay a tribute of verse on the grave of the one man whom he had allowed to pass behind the veil of reserve which he habitually threw over his inner life, and to share his feelings and aspirations. And never was a nobler tribute than the *Epitaphium Damonis* laid on the grave of friendship. We may, indeed, regret that the author of *Lycidas* should have chosen Latin as the vehicle for the expression of a more poignant and personal sorrow but Milton probably felt a classic diction was better calculated for the reserve that friendship demanded.

Like *Lycidas*, the poem is pastoral in form. The shepherd Thyrsis laments the death of Damon, the companion of his youth. The Latin hexameters, modelled on Vergil's *Bucolics*, are divided into stanzas by the recurring refrain :

‘Ite domum inpasti ; domino jam non vacat, agni.’

The poem should be carefully studied by all who wish to understand the feelings, hopes, and aspirations of Milton at this period. After recording the death of his friend, and the vain efforts of the maids and the shepherds to comfort him, the poet complains in lines of exquisite



beauty that while birds and beasts soon find new companions, man alone, losing one friend, can find no solace for his sorrow. Then follows a sketch of his Italian tour and of his plans for the future :

' Twelve evenings since, as in poetic dream  
I meditating sat some statelier theme,  
The reeds no sooner touch'd my lip, though new,  
And unessay'd before, than wide they flew,  
Bursting their waxen bands, nor could sustain  
The deep-toned music of the solemn strain ;  
And I am vain perhaps, but I will tell  
How proud a theme I choose,—ye groves, farewell !  
Of Brutus, Dardan chief, my song shall be,  
How with his barks he plough'd the British sea,  
First from Rutupia's towering headland seen,  
And of his consort's reign, fair Imogen ;  
Of Brennus and Belinus, brothers bold,  
And of Arviragus, and how of old  
Our hardy sires the Armorican controll'd,  
And of the wife of Gorboduc, who, surprised  
By Uther, in her husband's form disguised,  
(Such was the force of Merlin's art) became  
Pregnant with Arthur of heroic fame.  
These themes I now resolve,—and oh—if Fate  
Proportion to these themes my lengthen'd date,  
Adieu my shepherd's reed ! yon pine-tree bough  
Shall be thy future home ; there dangle thou  
Forgotten and disused, unless ere long  
Thou change thy Latian for a British song ;  
A British ?—even so,—the powers of man  
Are bounded, little is the most he can ;  
And it shall well suffice me, and shall be  
Fame, and proud recompense enough for me,  
If Usa, golden-hair'd, my verse may learn,  
If Alain bending o'er his crystal urn,  
Swift-whirling Abra, Trent's o'ershadow'd stream,  
Thames, lovelier far than all in my esteem,  
Tamar's ore-tinctured flood, and, after these,  
The wave-worn shores of utmost Orcades.'



The elegy closes with the assurance that Damon is happy :

‘Ipse, caput nitidum cinctus rutilante coronâ,  
Lætæque frondentis gestans umbracula palmæ,  
Æternùm perages immortales hymenæos,  
Cantus ubi choreisque furit lyra mista beatis,  
Festa Sionæo bacchantur et Orgia thyrsos.’<sup>1</sup>

The daring paganism of these closing lines is astonishing, and perhaps indicates the influence on Milton’s religious opinions of intercourse with Italian culture.

The *Epitaphium Damonis* is the best, and—except for a few fragments—the last of Milton’s Latin poems. His Latin verse surpassed that of his contemporaries, not so much in scholarly elegance as in force of expression. To him Latin is almost a living language. He did not servilely follow any one classical model. Landor says, ‘I find traces in Milton of nearly all the best Latin poets, excepting Lucretius.’ Ovid and Vergil were perhaps the two poets whose influence over his Latin style was strongest, and a few of his lines are not unworthy of either at his best. But though Latin verse was still a means of intercourse among European scholars, Milton wisely chose rather to be read by his own countrymen, in the *Brittonicum stridens*, or, as Mr. Pattison translates it, ‘the harsh and grating Brittonic idiom.’

Although Milton had been called home by the state of

<sup>1</sup> ‘Thou, with thy fair head crowned with the golden, glittering cincture,

Waving green branches of palm, and walking the gladsome procession,

Aye shalt act and repeat the endless heavenly nuptials,

There where song never fails, and the lyre and the dance mix to madness

There where the revel rages and Sion’s thyrsus beats time.’

MR. MASSON’S translation.

public affairs, he did not plunge at once into political controversies. After a few months in lodgings he took a house in Aldersgate in order to supervise the education of two nephews, who had been committed to his care by their mother, Annie Philips, on the death of their father. Here he lived a quiet and studious life, 'cheerfully leaving the events of public affairs first to God, and then to those to whom the people had committed that task.'

He was now seriously considering what should be the subject of that *magnum opus* for which he had been so long preparing himself. Among the manuscripts in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge, is one containing the original draft of several of Milton's early poems. This is followed by rough sketches of nearly a hundred possible subjects, gathered chiefly from British and English history, and from the historical books of the Bible. The lines quoted above from the *Epitaphium Damonis* show that Milton still inclined to legendary British history :

'Of Brutus, Dardan chief, my song shall be !' etc.

though his first attempt at composition had been unsuccessful—'The reeds burst their fastenings and flew apart'—in other words, the poet broke down.

But already the alternative had presented itself of a poem on some sacred subject, to be treated dramatically ; and four of the sketches deal with the subject of the Fall and the loss of Paradise. The life of Samson, it is of interest to note, also supplies suggestions for a drama.

The choice lay between a historical romance and a sacred drama, and the question of subject was still undecided when the Long Parliament met in November.

## CHAPTER II.

### MILTON'S PROSE WORKS.

MILTON'S important prose works were almost all written and published between the meeting of the Long Parliament in November, 1640, and the Restoration. They consist of twenty-five pamphlets, twenty-one in English, and four in Latin, and some minor writings belonging to the last years of his life. The period was the greatest pamphleteering age in English history. While old institutions were being reconstructed, old traditions undermined, and old beliefs remodelled, every man who had, or thought he had, anything of value to contribute to the formation of public opinion or dogmatic belief, turned to pamphlet writing as naturally as at a later age he would have turned to correspondence in the periodical press. And the pamphlets of the period, of which thousands are stored in the British Museum Library, have, for the most part, as little claim as our daily papers to a place in English literature. They are ephemeral publications, hastily and carelessly put together, strongly partizan, and often scurrilously abusive. Milton's pamphlets share to the full all these characteristics except the first; among all these productions of the period they alone have, in any real sense, survived. And, on the whole, they deserve to survive, apart from the personal interest attaching to anything from the pen that wrote *Paradise Lost*. For, ephemeral as is their immediate purpose, they are pleas for some-

thing higher than the temporary cause that they defend. Liberty is their underlying idea; but liberty conceived of not as the absence of law, but as the emancipation from a lower law in order to more perfect obedience to another and better. It was the strength of this conception that drove Milton from the Presbyterian to the Independent Party, and even beyond the moderate Independents into an almost antinomian theological position. Man must obey God, and all that conflicts with that supreme duty is tyranny, unjustifiable, intolerable, in all ways to be protested against and brought to naught. And with all the vigour that comes of clear conviction and strong hope, Milton threw himself, when once his first reluctance had been overcome, into the war of opinions that was raging around him.

His pamphlets fall into three groups, treating of ecclesiastical, domestic, and civil liberty. The ecclesiastical tracts deal chiefly with questions of Church government, and belong for the most part to the earlier years of the period; the second group includes the pamphlets on *Divorce*, the *Tractate on Education*, and the *Areopagitica*, in defence of freedom in the expression of opinion; the pamphlets on civil liberty belong to the years of the Commonwealth, and have less literary value, though greater political interest.

To deal in detail with each of Milton's pamphlets would exceed the scope of this volume, especially as a considerable number of them cannot possibly be regarded as productions of any literary value. A bare outline of the circumstances of their production must suffice as an accompaniment to more detailed notice of a few of the more important.

The first controversy in which Milton became involved was that on Church reform. Early in 1641, Bishop Hall,

who had in the preceding year come forward as the champion of the bishops in a pamphlet, *Episcopacy by Divine Right*, published a *Humble Remonstrance* to Parliament against the aims of the Root and Branch party, who had begun to demand the entire abolition of episcopacy in the English Church. A reply to Hall's *Remonstrance* appeared almost immediately, the work of five authors, whose combined initials furnished the *nom-de-guerre*, Smectymnuus.<sup>1</sup> The chief parties in the compilation of this Puritan vindication was taken by Thomas Young, Milton's old tutor, now vicar of Stowmarket; and there is some reason to believe that Milton himself had a small share in its production. But his chief contribution to the discussion was issued in June, 1641, in the shape of a bulky pamphlet *Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England*. Milton's thesis is that the Reformation, after a hopeful beginning, had received a check in its progress. From whom? From three classes of persons—the Antiquitarians, the Libertines (or Opportunists), and the Politicians. And all culminates in the iniquities of the bishops, whom Milton denounces through pages of indignation, scorn, contempt, mingling in a torrent of words that threatens to break through all rules of orderly arrangement. Then, by one of those amazing transitions which characterize most of his prose works, he suddenly turns aside to offering a sublime appeal to God to defend the cause of righteousness,—a passage may serve to show Milton's prose style at its best:

“ Oh ! Thou, that after the impetuous rage of five bloody inundations, and the succeeding sword of intestine war soaking the land in her own gore, didst pity the sad and ceaseless

<sup>1</sup> Stephen Marshall, Edward Calamy, Thomas Young, Matthew Newcomen, William (w = uu) Spurstow.

revolution of our swift and thick-coming sorrows—when we were quite breathless, of Thy free grace didst motion peace and terms of covenant with us, and, having well nigh freed us from anti-Christian thralldom, didst build up this Britannic Empire to a glorious and enviable height with her daughter islands around her—stay us in this felicity; let not the obstinacy of our half-obedience and will-worship bring forth that viper of sedition that for these four-score years hath been breeding to eat through the entrails of our peace; but let her cast her abortive spawn without the danger of this travailing and throbbing Kingdom, that we may still remember in our solemn thanksgivings how for us the northern ocean, even the frozen Thule, was scattered with the proud shipwrecks of the Spanish Armada, and the very Maw of Hell ransacked, and made to give up her concealed destruction, ere she could vent it in that terrible and damned blast. Oh, how much more glorious will those former deliverances appear when we shall know them not only to have saved us from greatest misery past but to have reserved us for greatest happiness to come! Hitherto thou hast but freed us, and that not fully, from the unjust and tyrannous claim of thy foes; now unite us entirely and appropriate us to Thyself; tie us everlastingly in willing homage to the prerogative of Thy Eternal Throne. And now we know, O Thou our most certain hope and defence, that Thy enemies have been consulting all the sorceries of the Great Whore, and have joined their plots with that sad Intelligencing Tyrant, that mischiefs the world with his mines of Ophir, and lies thirsting to revenge his naval ruins that have larded our seas. But let them all take counsel together, and let it come to nought; let them decree and do Thou cancel it; let them embattle themselves and be broken, let them embattle and be broken, for Thou art with us!’

In such passages as these the pamphleteer becomes a prophet. Alas! that the prophet often so forgot his office as to throw mud like the lowest of the pamphleteers!

Almost immediately after the publication of this pam-



phlet, which was issued anonymously, two more by the same author appeared, one *Of Prelatical Episcopacy*, in reply to Archbishop Ussher's *Judgment of Dr. Rainolds touching the Original of Episcopacy*, the other *Animadversions upon Bishop Hall's Reply to Smectymnuus*. Both are occasional and unimportant; perhaps the most interesting and best known passage in the reply to Ussher is Milton's description of the Fathers, 'Whatsoever Time or the heedless hand of blind Chance hath drawn down from of old to this present in her huge dragnet, whether fish or seaweed, shells or shrubs, unpicked, unchosen, these are the Fathers.' The *Animadversions* consist of sixty-eight pages of violent and ill-mannered attack upon Hall. After having set at naught every dictate of good taste and controversial fairness, the writer closes with a prayer almost as magnificent as that quoted above! The character of the pamphlet is quite in accord with the proprieties of controversy as then recognized, but no other pamphleteer could spring like Milton in one moment from the vulgar and ridiculous to the devotional and sublime.)

Two other pamphlets followed early in the following year—an *Apology for Smectymnuus*, renewing the attack on Hall, and defending Milton's own position against charges made by him; and *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy*, a pamphlet of considerable length, published under Milton's own name, and asserting strongly the presbyterian argument. It is one of the ablest of his prose writings, and is full of valuable autobiographical touches. The following passage, dealing with the writer's plans and ambitions, must be quoted as bearing on the general literary character of the age and his attitude towards it:

'The accomplishment of them (*i.e.*, his literary projects) lies not but in a power above man's to promise; but that



none hath by more studious ways endeavoured, and with more unwearied spirit that none shall, *that* I dare almost aver of myself, as far as life and free leisure will extend, and that the land had once enfranchised herself from this impertinent yoke of Prelaty, under whose inquisitorious and tyrannical duncery no free and splendid wit can flourish. Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him towards the payment of what I am indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist, or the trencher fury of a riming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters, but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out his seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar to touch and purify the life of whom he pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs. Till which in some measure he accomplished, at mine own peril and cost I refuse not to sustain the expectation from as many as are not loth to hazard as much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them.'

Milton's divorce pamphlets grew out of the circumstances of his domestic life. In the summer of 1643 he took a sudden journey into Oxfordshire and there married Mary Powell, a girl of seventeen, the daughter of a royalist squire who had been a client of his father. The marriage seems to have been the result of a hasty impulse, and was repented of as quickly by both parties. Milton found that his young wife could not give him the 'fit and matchable conversation' he desired, and Mary Milton must have found her husband's quiet and studious home-life intolerably dull. So Milton occupied his honeymoon in writing the first of his divorce pamphlets, and after a few weeks Mary Milton went back on a visit to her

Oxfordshire home and refused to return to her husband. *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* bears on every page the evidence that it is the work of a disappointed idealist. Though his own marriage is nowhere mentioned, it is everywhere present to the mind of the writer. He pleads for true companionship as the ideal of married life; and, where this cannot be, claims for man, for whom woman was made, the right to declare dissolved a union that is only a bondage. Of the practical side of the question Milton says nothing. He is reasoning for an ideal, re-asserting the rights of man as against Canon Law and Custom, and he does so fearlessly, and at times eloquently. If he can convince the nation—‘then I doubt not but with one gentle stroking to wipe away ten thousand tears out of the life of men.’ Milton dedicated his *Doctrine and Discipline* to the English Parliament, calling on that assembly to legislate in accordance with its proposals. Though this appeal met with no response, the controversy had important consequences in the life of Milton. It was the beginning of a definite breach with the Presbyterians, who hastened to disown the pamphlet and to anathematize its author, whose views of marriage were calculated to bring into discredit the whole party to which he belonged. Milton was entirely unmoved by the general outcry that his opinions evoked. He derived a stern satisfaction from the reprobation with which the vulgar visited him. His divorce tracts were addressed to men who dared to think, and ‘ran the town numbering good intellects.’ He followed up the *Doctrine and Discipline* in the following year with three more pamphlets on the same subject. In the first of these—*Martin Bucer’s Judgment on Divorce*—he claims the support of the reformer for his view of marriage. The next—*Tetrachordon*, an exposition of the four chief passages of Scripture bearing

on the question of divorce—is chiefly notable for the threat with which it closes: ‘If the law make not a timely provision, let the law, as reason is, bear the censure of the consequences.’ This may perhaps refer to a project which, there is some reason to believe, Milton actually entertained, of carrying his principle into practice by entering into a union with a young lady, of whom little is known, but whose reluctance to brave public opinion seems to have led to the abandonment of the proposal.

The last of these tracts—*Colasterion*—is, as its name implies, a punishment inflicted on the anonymous author of a tract in reply to the original pamphlet. We have quoted a passage from Milton at his best; anyone wishing to see him at his worst need only glance through this pamphlet. The luckless opponent of Milton’s opinion is ‘mauled, tumbled, and rolled in the mire’ through pages of angry vituperation. He is ‘a pork,’ ‘a clod,’ a serving man both by nature and function,’ ‘an idiot by breeding, and a solicitor by presumption,’ ‘a basest and hungriest inditer,’ ‘a boar in the vineyard,’ ‘a snout in this pickle,’ ‘an unswilled hogshead,’ ‘a brazen ass;’ nor are these the worst of the abusive epithets heaped upon him by the infuriated champion of domestic liberty, who closes by assuring all men that he is quite ready to argue the whole question fairly and civilly with any antagonist. But here the controversy closed; and in the same year (1645) Mary Milton was reconciled to her husband, to whom she bore several children, dying in 1653 at the age of twenty-six, after six years of married life which seems to have been moderately happy.

While Milton was engaged in these paper conflicts, he had been carrying on the work of teaching his two nephews, and a few other boys who had joined them as his pupils. His interest in educational questions had brought him

into connection with Samuel Hartlib, philanthropist and social reformer, who, among other schemes for the benefit of mankind, was trying to disseminate in England the educational theories of the Moravian Comenius. To Hartlib, Milton addressed, in 1644, his *Tract on Education*, a pamphlet setting forth a splendidly impracticable scheme of what we should now call secondary education. In his protest against 'grammatical abstractions,' and his sense of the value of concrete illustrations in teaching, Milton is at one with Comenius, and with modern educational theorists; but his whole scheme is that of an idealist, who is laying down general principles under the guise of practical proposals. The tract belongs rather to the theory of education than to literature, but it is notable as an example of the versatility of Milton's genius, and as a step in the emancipation of education from the bondage of routine.

To the same year (1644) belongs Milton's best-known prose treatise, the *Areopagitica*. He had published his divorce pamphlets in defiance of the licensing regulations which had come into force in June, 1643, and when the Stationers' Company brought the matter before Parliament in the following year, he replied by publishing, without licence, *Areopagitica*; a *Speech for the Liberty of Unlicenced Printing*.

The pamphlet no doubt owes part of its popularity to the subject with which it deals. It is hard now to feel a strong interest in those questions of Church Government and Discipline for which men died cheerfully in the seventeenth century, but on the freedom of the Press we are at one with Milton, and so we feel the force of his reasoning and the strength of his cause. But the tract is also the most uniformly good of all his prose works. It has little of the vehement invective that forms so notable

a feature in his other controversial pamphlets, but is distinguished by lucid eloquence, calm and careful reasoning, and occasional touches of humour. This comparative simplicity of style makes the tract by far the easiest of any of Milton's prose writings to read and understand. Above all, it is written with deliberate purpose of conviction. Milton believed in the wisdom of the statesmen of the English parliament, to whom he addresses his appeal, and he pleads the cause of freedom of thought with dignified and manly eloquence.

Many of the aphorisms of the *Areopagitica* have passed into familiar use. 'Revolutions of ages do not oft recover the loss of a rejected truth.' 'Opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making.' 'As good almost kill a man as kill a good book.' 'Whatever thing we hear or see, sitting, walking, travelling, or conversing, may be fitly called our book.' These, and many other maxims, are almost proverbial.

To the biographer of Milton the *Areopagitica* is of special interest as making a definite stage in the development of his religious opinions. Broadly, it indicates his adhesion to that section of the Independent party that had come to regard with disfavour any ordained ministry, and cast off all idea of national religious uniformity. One passage bearing on the question may be quoted as a specimen of the style of the treatise :

'The light which we have gained was given us not to be ever staring at but by it to discover onward things more remote from our knowledge. It is not the unfrocking of a priest, the unmitring of a Bishop, and the removing him from off the Presbyterian shoulders, that will make us a happy nation. No, if other things as great in the Church, and in the rule of life both economical and political, be not looked into, and reformed, we have looked

so long upon the blaze that Züinglius and Calvin hath beaconed up to us that we are starked blind. There be who perpetually complain of Schisms and Sects, and make it a calamity that any man dissents from their maxims. . . . Lords and Commons of England, consider what nation it is whereof ye are, and whereof ye are governors; a nation not slow and dull, but of a quick, ingenious, and piercing spirit, acute to invent, subtle, and sinewy to discourse, not beneath the reach of any point the highest that human capacity can soar to. . . . Now once again, by all concurrence of signs, and by the general instinct of holy and devout men, as they daily and solemnly express their thoughts, God is decreeing to begin some new and great period in his Church, even to the Reforming of the Reformation itself. What does He then, but reveal himself to his servants, and, as his manner is, first to his Englishmen,—I say, as his manner is, first to us, though we mark not the method of his counsels, and are unworthy?’

Then follows the well-known passage describing London, ‘the mansion-house of Liberty,’ where men are revolving new ideas and seeking new knowledge.

‘What wants there to such a towardly and pregnant soil, but wise and faithful labourers, to make a knowing people, a Nation of prophets, of sages and of worthies.’

The *Areopagitica* is the high-water mark of Milton’s prose writings. Never again in the years that follow could he write with the same strong assurance of the ultimate triumph of freedom, the same dominant and invincible trust in the divinely appointed destiny of England.

With the divorce pamphlets of 1645, the first period of Milton’s pamphleteering activity came to a close. The next three years were uneventful in his life, though full of stir and conflict in national affairs. Out of the confusion there emerged at last an oligarchy of determined men,



strong in the support of the army, and ready to go all lengths in the cause of liberty.

An irrevocable step was taken in the trial and condemnation of the king, and while the nation was still seething with the mingled emotions evoked by his execution on January 30th, 1649, Milton broke silence to throw his influence unreservedly on the side of the regicides. His pamphlet, *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, was partly written during the king's trial, and was published only a fortnight after his death. It is a notable production, though inferior in literary interest to his earlier treatises. In one passage Milton links together the Social Compact theory, then in vogue, and that doctrine of the right of all men to liberty, which is usually regarded as the glory of our own age:

‘No one who knows aught can be so stupid as to deny that all men were naturally born free, being the image and representation of God himself, and were by privilege above all the creatures, born to command and not to obey, and that they lived so till, from the root of Adam's transgression, falling among themselves to do wrong and violence, and foreseeing that such courses must needs tend to the destruction of them all, they agreed by common league to bind each other from mutual injury, and jointly to defend themselves against any that gave disturbance or opposition to such agreement. Hence came Cities, Towns, and Commonwealths.’

The argument of the pamphlet is stronger on the theoretical than on the historical side. It puts the case for the Independent party boldly and clearly as against malignant Royalists and vacillating Presbyterians. The dominant faction naturally welcomed the adhesion of so powerful an advocate, and within a month of the publication of the pamphlet Milton accepted the office of Latin



Secretary to the Council of State. The special work of the Latin Secretary was the preparation of foreign despatches, but, in appointing Milton, the Council no doubt had also in view the probability that a literary champion might be needed to defend their domestic policy and principles. Indeed, scarcely had he accepted office when three distinct literary tasks were committed to him. The first of these, a kind of commentary on some documents on Irish affairs, published by order of the Council, was quickly disposed of, and has no special literary interest. But the *Eikonoklastes* and the *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* are among Milton's most important political writings.

Ten days after the death of the king there appeared a little octavo volume, destined to be one of the most famous books of the world. *Eikon Basilike—the True Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in his Solitudes and Sufferings*—purported to be a record of the meditations and devotions of the king during the last eight years of his life, and though no name appeared on the title-page, few doubted that it was the work of Charles himself. Though Dr. Gauden's claim to the authorship is strong, resting as it does on his own assertion, it is by no means certain that the materials at least were not contributed by the king. The book is somewhat dull reading now, and has not any great literary or historical value; but to the men of that day, in whose memories the horror and pathos of the tragedy at Whitehall were still fresh, it was a living book, to be read reverently in secret places, with strong passion and tears. No proscription could check its circulation, no decree counteract its fascination. Edition after edition appeared as fast as secret presses could turn them out, and under the spell of its influence the king became encircled with a halo of sanctity almost divine. Patience in suffering has often proved more than

an atonement for misuse of power ; and Charles the Martyr with his crown of thorns became henceforth a kind of idealized personality, an incarnation of righteousness in affliction. This reaction, extending far beyond distinctively royalist circles, constituted a great danger to the authority of the Council of State, none too secure in its tenure of power. An effort must be made to break the spell, and accordingly, after an unsuccessful attempt to induce Selden to publish a reply, Cromwell and the Council laid the task upon the Latin secretary. We may well believe his statement that he accepted the commission with reluctance : ' I take it on me as a work assigned, rather than by me chosen or affected,' but, having accepted it, he carried it out with characteristic vigour. Following up the royal meditations chapter by chapter, Milton meets them with refutation, mockery, or ridicule. He feels nothing of the glamour of sentimental attachment to the royal saint. The tone of his reply is sufficiently indicated by the text prefixed to the pamphlet—' As a roaring lyon, and a ranging beare, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.' At times Milton is savagely vindictive in his antipathy to the late king, as, for instance, when he revives the malignant calumny that Charles had poisoned his own father ; and throughout the pamphlet no gleam of sympathy for a fallen man, no spark of generous feeling towards a vanquished cause, lightens the stern pages of ruthless analysis and condemnation. In rhetorical ability and force of thought and language *Eikonoklastes* completely surpasses the king's book, but the image that floated before the tear-dimmed eyes of men could not be broken by weapons of logic and argument ; nor was Milton himself at his best in a pamphlet where he was obliged to abandon the broad standpoint of general principles for tedious contention over minute details. Having completed the task laid on him by the Council,

Milton turned to grapple with another and more tangible antagonist. This new opponent was Dr. Salmasius, a Professor at Leyden and a scholar of European reputation, who now came forward as the champion of the fallen monarchy in a Latin pamphlet, the *Defensio Regia*. Milton replied in the *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*, published in 1651, and the paper war raged for some time, with little credit to any of the controversialists engaged in it. Milton's power of vituperation proved at least as great in Latin as in English, and such signs of nobler feeling and worthier thought as relieved the first two pamphlets of the series, are sought for in vain in the offensive and scurrilous attacks on the Antwerp Professor Morus. One interest alone preserves the remembrance of this controversy in English literature—it cost Milton his eyesight. For some years his sight had been failing, and complete rest alone could have averted its entire loss, but the call to serve the State was imperative, and the sacrifice was made deliberately. 'I concluded,' he says in the *Defensio Secunda*, 'to employ the little remaining eyesight I was to enjoy in doing this, the greatest service to the Commonwealth it was in my power to render.'

Milton's remaining prose works fall into two groups—those published during the period immediately preceding the Restoration, and those published near the close of his life. The first group consists of six pamphlets, dealing with the religious and political situation, of which the most important is the *Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth*. They are hastily extemporized utterances, full of hurry and confusion, with a deep undercurrent of despair sounding through their imprecations and appeals which is in strong contrast to the hope and enthusiasm of the earlier pamphlets. Blind to the growing forces making for the Restoration, Milton thundered to a disregardful

audience,—bold and tenacious still, though dimly conscious that he stood almost alone. The voice of the prophet cannot be silent, though he stands in a deserted street, and hears far off the tumult of many voices that welcome back the king. He was forced at last by the march of events to seek refuge in concealment and silence. *Eikonoklastes* and the *Defensio* were ordered to be burnt by the common hangman, and a proclamation was issued against the author, who, however, 'had withdrawn himself so that no endeavours for his apprehension could take effect.' The passing of the Act of Indemnity, and the interest of several friends at Court, at length rescued Milton from further molestation, and he now emerged from retirement and imprisonment, with no further pecuniary loss than that of a part of his fortune, which he had invested in Government securities.

The prose works of Milton's old age consist of a *History of Britain*, published in 1669; though probably written some years earlier; a fragment on the *History of Muscovy*, issued in 1682; a little pamphlet on *Toleration* (1673) and a Latin treatise on *Christian Doctrine*. This treatise was left unpublished at the time of his death, and ultimately found its way, together with his Latin letters, into the archives of the State Paper Office, where it was discovered in 1823. It is an attempt to construct a complete theological system on the basis of Scripture alone, and is an interesting summary of Milton's religious opinions at the close of his life.

Estimates of Milton's prose style have too often been coloured by the views of the critic with regard to his political opinions. By his own confession, he was 'not naturally disposed to this manner of writing, wherein,' he adds, 'knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may

account it, but of my left hand.' This 'left-handedness' shows itself in Milton's style in a lack of fluency and ease, in a stiff and cumbrous richness, and in the 'hyperlatinism' not only of its vocabulary, but even more of its whole character and construction. If the object of controversy be, not to silence, but to convince, Milton's style is, except perhaps in the *Areopagitica*, entirely unsuited to its purpose. There is no methodical argument, no careful examination of evidence, no attempts to appreciate the point of view of an opponent. When he is not writing under the pressure of strong emotion, his prose is dull and colourless; under the spell of passion it catches fire and becomes either scurrilously abusive, or inarticulately sublime. He is an arch-offender among seventeenth century writers in the matter of long and involved sentences, which sometimes forget their own beginning, and defy all rules of grammatical construction. But there are passages in his prose works, the ornate splendour and stately rhythm of which are unsurpassed, even in an age adorned by the florid exuberance of Jeremy Taylor and the stately serenity of Sir Thomas Browne.

## CHAPTER III.

### MILTON'S LATER POEMS.

IF Milton had retired at the Restoration to a life of leisured ease in the midst of his books and his thoughts, and had in due course produced the three masterpieces of his old age, we might well have wondered that the man, who for twenty years had seemed wholly given up to political interests could thus rise out of the clamour and commotion of the Restoration age to realize and fulfil the dreams of his youth. But our wonder becomes yet further increased when we note the circumstances under which *Paradise Lost* was actually written. Begun probably in 1658, when the Commonwealth was beginning to totter to its fall, the tremendous imagery of the first two books was shaping itself in the mind of the poet through all the terrible year of disillusionment and anxiety that followed. Rescued from imminent peril of death to pass the remainder of his days in blindness, domestic discord and comparative poverty, he resumed his task, while the men whose cause he had defended were being hunted down as criminals, or their bodies torn from their graves to be suspended on the gibbet.

From the allusions in his prose writings it is clear that Milton had at no time lost sight of his great ambition to write something that after ages would not willingly let die. Ever and anon he recurs to it, as the true purpose of his life.

postponed only for a time. So, at the very outset of his political life, he had written—‘I trust to make it manifest with what small willingness I endure to interrupt the pursuit of no less hopes than these, and leave a calm and pleasing solitariness, fed with cheerful and confident thoughts, to embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes; put from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies, to come into the dim reflection of hollow antiquities, sold by the seeming bulk.’ But the long silence of nearly twenty years, broken only by the stray ‘trumpet notes’ of the sonnets, was not too long for the necessary work of preparation, hindered as it was by political distraction and failing sight. It was the consciousness that the fruit was ripe unto harvest, rather than any change in political or personal matters, that led him to set about the composition of the poem in the autumn of 1658.

He had returned from Italy with the idea in his mind of an epic poem on some subject of British history, probably connected with King Arthur. The next year had brought a change in this plan. In the first place, he had turned from British to sacred history, and in the second place he was drawn to dramatic in preference to epic poetry—to the “lofty grave tragedians of Greece.” Indeed, *Satan’s Address to the Sun in the Fourth Book of Paradise Lost* was actually written in 1642, as the exordium of a dramatic poem on the fall of man. But when Milton resumed his work sixteen years later, he reverted, for reasons not recorded, to the epic form. In doing so it can hardly be doubted that he was guided by a wise instinct. He had not the self-abandonment needed for the highest dramatic work. The character of his genius was subjective, and as the self-reliance of his youth passed into the involuntary isolation of his maturer years this subjectivity is to be dis-



cerned asserting itself yet more strongly until it culminated in *Samson Agonistes*.

When once Milton had started on his great poem the work went on rapidly, in spite of all interruptions. It was generally at night that his 'celestial patroness' visited him, inspiring the verse that one of his daughters, or any friend that happened to be available, was summoned to take down from his dictation. The period of composition of the various Books can only be conjectured from internal evidence. The invocation at the opening of the Third Book is sometimes regarded as marking the resumption of the poem after the dangers of the Restoration :

' Hail, holy light . . . .  
Thee I revisit now with bolder wing,  
Escaped the Stygian pool, though long detained  
In that obscure sojourn, while in my flight  
Through utter and through middle darkness borne.'

At the opening of the Seventh Book comes another autobiographical fragment, which, according to this view, belongs to the time when the licentiousness of the Restoration period had begun to show itself, and when the poet's isolation had grown habitual :

' Descend from heaven, Urania, by that name  
If rightly thou art called, whose voice divine  
Following, above the Olympian hill I soar  
Above the flight of Pegasean wing.

\* \* \* \* \*

Half yet remains unsung, but narrower bound  
Within the visible diurnal sphere ;  
Standing on earth, not rapt above the pole,  
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged  
To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,  
On evil days though fallen and evil tongues ;  
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round  
And solitude ; yet not alone while thou

Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or when morn  
Purples the east : still govern thou my song,  
Urania, and fit audience find, though few ;  
But drive far off the barbarous dissonance  
Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race  
Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard  
In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears  
To rapture, till the savage clamour drown'd  
Both harp and voice ; nor could the muse defend  
Her son. So fail not thou, who thee implores :  
For thou art heavenly, she an empty dream.'

But as this passage is the first definite and unmistakable reference to the Restoration that occurs in the poem, it seems not improbable that Milton had completed the first six books before the work was interrupted by the political dangers which still menaced him when he resumed his appointed task. If this view be correct, the poem was probably begun some years before the close of the Commonwealth period, and the reference to the poet's blindness at the beginning of Book III. gains an added meaning as having been written soon after his loss of sight had become complete, in 1656.

According to Aubrey, the poem was completed by the close of 1663, but two more years were occupied by the work of revision. We know from Ellwood that it was finished by the autumn of 1665. Milton's flight from the plague-stricken city in that year, and the Great Fire that laid London in ashes in the following year, retarded its publication till 1667. In the April of that year the agreement with Mr. Samuel Symons for the issue of *Paradise Lost* was signed—the poet to receive £5 on publication, and £5 for each entire edition disposed of. 'According to the present value of money,' says Mr. Masson, 'it was as if Milton had received £17 10s. down, and was to receive £70 in all on the supposition of a sale of 3,700 copies.' The

total sum paid by Symons to Milton, and to his widow, was £18, and as he ultimately sold the copyright for £25 he does not seem to have made any large profit for himself out of the transaction.

The poem had, not without difficulty, secured the licence necessary for publication, and was issued in August, 1667, three weeks after the death of Cowley and a fortnight before the fall of Clarendon.

The first edition was 'a small quarto, consisting of 342 pages in such copies as are without the Argument and other preliminary matter, and of 356 pages in the copies that have the addition.' The variations in the title-pages of existing copies of this edition raise some interesting bibliographical questions, which are discussed in detail by Mr. Masson.

"Very great care must have been bestowed on the reading of the proofs, either by Milton himself, or by some competent person who had undertaken to see the book through the press for him. It seems likely that Milton caused page after page to be read over slowly to him, and occasionally even the words to be spelt out. There are at all events certain systematic peculiarities of spelling and punctuation which it seems most reasonable to attribute to Milton's own instructions. Altogether, for a book printed in such circumstances, it is wonderfully accurate; and in all the particulars of type, paper, and general getting up, the first appearance of *Paradise Lost* must have been rather attractive than otherwise to book-buyers of that day. The selling price of the volume was 3s.—which is perhaps as if a similar book now were published at about 10s. 6d."

The immediate success of the poem was not great. The man and the subject were alike aliens in the literary world

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Masson, Introduction to *Paradise Lost*.

of the Restoration; and it was only here and there that a glimmering consciousness awoke in the minds of men that a great poem had been born into the world.

The first edition of 3,500 copies was, however, exhausted within about two years of the date of publication, and in 1674 a second edition was issued with several changes. The prefatory note on *The Verse* and a summary of the *Argument* of the poem had been added by Milton to the later issues of the first edition. The *Argument* was now broken up and prefixed to the various books, which were at the same time increased to twelve by the division of the seventh and tenth. A few verbal corrections were made, and commendatory verses by Andrew Marvel and Samuel Barrow, physician-in-ordinary to Charles II., were prefixed. A third edition followed four years later.

Milton's home life since the Restoration had been uneventful. On his release from prison he had lived for a short time in Holborn, then in Jewin Street, and had finally settled at a small house at Bunhill Fields, which became his home to the end of his life. In 1656, three years after the death of his first wife, he had married again, and a record of his affection for his second wife, who died only fifteen months after the marriage, remains in Sonnet, No. XXIII.:

‘Methought I saw my late espoused saint  
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave.’

Failing to find domestic peace in the society of his daughters, he married, in 1663, a third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, who did her best to make the last twelve years of his life happy.

While staying at Chalfont St. Giles, at a little cottage where he had taken refuge from the plague, Milton had handed to his young Quaker friend, Thomas Ellwood, the

manuscript of *Paradise Lost*. Ellwood returned it with the memorable query, 'Thou hast said much here of *Paradise Lost*, but what hast thou to say of *Paradise Found*?' 'He made no answer,' adds the narrator, 'but sat some time in a muse; then brake off that discourse, and fell on another subject.' But when Ellwood and Milton met in London some time in the following year, the poet produced the manuscript of *Paradise Regained*, and said, 'This is owing to you, for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought on.' This is the only information we have as to the date of the composition of *Paradise Regained*. With regard to *Samson Agonistes* our data are still more meagre. Both poems were published together in the autumn of 1670.

Milton lived four years longer, busy to the last with literary occupations. In 1673 a new edition of his early poems was issued, including such of his sonnets as could safely be published. Those on Cromwell, Vane, and Fairfax were not published till twenty years later, when Phillips appended them to his Life of his uncle. To this same year (1673) belongs Milton's treatise on *True Religion, Heresy, Schism, and Toleration*, and in the following year he collected and published his *Familiar Latin Epistles and Academical Exercises* in a small volume. A Latin Lexicon and the treatise on *Christian Doctrine* were left unfinished at his death, which took place on the 8th of November, 1674, 'with so little pain that the time of his expiring was not perceived by those in the room.' Four days later 'all his learned and great friends in London, not without a concourse of the vulgar, accompanied his body to the church of St. Giles, near Cripplegate, where he was buried in the chancel.'

He had outlived the bitter hostility of the evil days that

immediately followed the Restoration, and some at least of the literary leaders of the time had done themselves honour by seeking out the blind poet. Dryden's interview, when he came to ask for leave to dramatise *Paradise Lost*, is famous in literary history, more famous than the *State of Innocence and the Fall of Man*, which was produced in due course, with proper accompaniment of eulogies on the poet who had 'refined' the 'golden ore' of Milton's verses. Dryden afterwards learned more reverence for the great work, 'one of the greatest, most noble, and most sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced;' and it must have been with little reluctance that he saw his dramatic burlesque slip into the limbo of forgotten things.

*Paradise Lost* is the product of two great movements—Puritanism and the Renaissance. Or, to put the same thought in another way, the conception of the poem is Hebraic, its form and imagery are classical. Within the limits of the sacred narrative, from which Milton would not allow himself to deviate, his luxuriant imagination found ample scope for all its stored wealth of learning; and the issue is something far different from the Hebrew original. Few of us, probably, realize how often we unconsciously read into the Scriptural narrative of the Creation and the Fall ideas instilled by Milton's splendid poem.

Much has been written as to the 'sources' of *Paradise Lost*. Many of the claims may safely be dismissed as of little value, though Milton gleaned in so many fields that it would be rash to deny his acquaintance with any poem on the Creation or the Fall, published before the middle of the seventeenth century. But though he may have drawn stray thoughts or suggestions from Grotius's *Adamus Exul*, or Vondel's *Lucifer*, or Andreini's *Adamo*, as he certainly did from Sylvester's *Du Bartas*, and Giles Fletcher's *Christ's Victory and Triumph*, it was in the Bible that he found

his true inspiration. *Paradise Lost* is steeped in scriptural allusions and phrases, and redolent of the noble language of the Authorized Version, which perhaps no man ever knew more thoroughly than Milton. To enumerate all the other sources from which he gathered materials for his poem would be to record a course of thirty years of careful and constant reading, which included classical and Renaissance writers whose very names are now almost forgotten. For it must be remembered that from the time that he left Cambridge his studies had been deliberately planned as a preparation for his great poem; and from Greek tragedians to Jacobean dramatists, from the epics of Homer and Virgil to the romances of Ariosto and Spenser, all the great writers of the past were laid under contribution to furnish forth the poet's storehouse. Milton may be said to have summed up the Renaissance, first in his own mind, then in his poem. And he summed it up by making it his own, and sending it forth stamped with the impress of his personality, and winged with the 'ample pinions' of his transcendent imagination.

It is no derogation from Milton's greatness to say that he failed to achieve the impossible—that, setting forth to 'justify the ways of God to man,' he left the great problem as insoluble as ever. Indeed, it is where the consciousness of this didactic purpose is strongest on his mind that the chariot wheels drive most heavily. Genevan theology intrudes itself in heaven, and Puritanism haunts the leafy shades of Paradise. But the tremendous imagery of hell and chaos, the darkly majestic shapes that abide in these regions of eternal night, the unconquerable defiance of the fallen archangel and his peers—these are the outcome of no theological system. As Keats saw with unerring instinct, and showed in his splendid fragment *Hyperion*, the Satan of Milton's poem is not the fallen angel of Christian



theology but the vanquished Titan of Greek mythology, borne down not by force of wisdom or love, but by the sheer strength of the Thunderer of Olympus. Puritanism had, after long patience and under strong provocation, taken the sword, and had perished by the sword; but the great Puritan poet still, in the world of spirits, commits the vindication of right to the arbitrament of battle; and right is right, essentially and eternally, because it is stronger and prevails.

The human actors in the great drama are the issue of a compromise between the poet and the theologian. Far removed as they are from the white-robed forms of ethereal beauty with which the Spenserian muse would have peopled that wilderness of delights, they are scarcely less far removed from the strong, grave, simple-hearted dwellers in the Eden of the Hebrew poet. Courteous, hospitable, keenly interested in the astronomical and theological questions of Milton's age, they evoke in us a sense of incongruity as we watch them move through the primeval Paradise. But it is when Milton leads us through the gates of heaven that the limitations of his didactic purpose are most apparent. An infinite gulf separates the heaven of Isaiah's vision, shaken by the voices of the Cherubim, and darkened by the mystery of incense,—or the heaven of the Apocalypse, full of voices and white-robed multitudes,—from the heaven of Milton, into which we come, not to worship and wonder, but to hear discussions on theology. The rejection of symbolism gave to Puritan religious conceptions a kind of rude vigour, that shaded off almost imperceptibly into irreverence; and though Milton cannot fairly be charged with this, his heaven is the heaven of Calvinist dogma, of ordered rule and accurate definition, albeit illumined and adorned by his poetic fancy.

But it must be remembered that the same Calvinistic

learning that fettered the genius of the poet gave him that sublimity of thought in which *Paradise Lost* surpasses every other epic poem.

'When Milton was being reared,' says Mr. Pattison, 'Calvinism was not old and effete, a mere doctrine. It was a living system of thought, and one which carried the mind upwards towards the Eternal Will rather than downwards towards any personal security. . . . It must be acknowledged that a predestinarian scheme, leading the cogitation upward to dwell upon the "heavenly things before the foundation of the world," opens a vista of contemplation and poetical framework with which none other in the whole cycle of human thought can compare. . . . The horizon of *Paradise Lost* is not narrower than all space, its chronology not shorter than eternity; the globe of our earth becomes a mere spot in the physical universe, and the universe itself a drop suspended in the infinite empyrean.'

His aspiration had thus reached 'one of the highest arcs that human contemplation circling upwards can make from the glassy sea whereon she stands. Like his contemporary Pascal, his mind had beaten her wings against the prison walls of human thought.'

Mr. Masson has finely connected the vastness of the conception of the poem with the blindness of the poet, which had already 'converted all external space in his own sensations into an infinite of circumambient blackness, through which he could flash brilliance at his pleasure.' The cosmology of the poem is, as has often been pointed out, founded on the Ptolemaic conception, but with clear reference at times to the new Copernican view of the universe which was already winning the acceptance of men of science. So when Satan has struggled through the welter of chaos, he sees:

‘Far off th’ empyreal Heav’n, extended wide  
 In circuit, undetermin’d square or round,  
 With opal towers and battlements adorn’d  
 Of living sapphire, once his native seat;  
 And fast by, hanging in a golden chain,  
 This pendent world, in bigness as a star  
 Of smallest magnitude close by the moon.’

This ‘pendent world’ represents the whole sidereal universe, on whose outer sphere, or case, Satan first arrives, and from an opening in which he sees:

‘From eastern point  
 Of *Libra* to the fleecy star that bears  
*Andromeda* far off *Atlantic* seas  
 Beyond th’ horizon.’

The centre of this glittering galaxy is the earth, as in the Ptolemaic spheres, as developed by the latter Alphonsine System. Raphael’s reply to Adam’s inquiry leaves the matter unsettled, the great Architect has left the question to men’s disputes:

‘Perhaps to move  
 His laughter at their quaint opinions wide.’

•The scene of *Paradise Lost* opens in hell, where the fallen hosts of Satan lie stupefied on the burning lake, till their leader, awaked from bewilderment to the torment of realization, takes his stand on the shore of the lake, and summons them around him. The stupendous horror of the scene is marvellously intensified when the lost archangel bursts into tears at the sight of that vast host, dragged down to destruction by his ambition. Satan has not yet become hardened in resistance:

‘He above the rest  
 In shape and gesture proudly eminent  
 Stood like a tower; his form had not yet lost

All her original brightness, nor appear'd  
Less than arch-angel ruin'd, and the excess  
Of glory obscured ; as when the sun new risen  
Looks through the horizontal misty air  
Shorn of his beams, or from behind the moon  
In dim eclipse disastrous twilight sheds  
On half the nations, and with fear of change  
Perplexes monarchs. Darken'd so, yet shone  
Above them all th' arch-angel : but his face  
Deep scars of thunder had intrench'd, and care  
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows  
Of dauntless courage and considerate pride  
Waiting revenge : cruel his eye, but cast  
Signs of remorse and passion to behold  
The fellows of his crime, the followers rather,  
(Far other once beheld in bliss) condemn'd  
For ever now to have their lot in pain,  
Millions of Spirits for his fault amerced  
Of Heav'n, and from eternal splendours flung  
For his revolt, yet faithful how they stood,  
Their glory wither'd : as when Heav'n's fire  
Hath scath'd the forest oaks, or mountain pines,  
With singed top their stately growth though bare  
Stands on the blasted heath.'

Around this leader are ranged the dark potentates of heathen mythology—Moloch and Chemos, Baal and Thammuz, Dagon, Osiris, and the rest—each name a word of dread, full of associations with obscene rites or hideous orgies. Satan's speech to the host sets forth the scheme the working out of which is the theme of the poem, and summons the chieftain angels to a council, for the assembling of which the vast palace, Pandemonium, rises as if by magic. (In the great debate with which the second book opens, the speakers give counsels that accord with their characters. Moloch is all for "desperate revenge and battle dangerous," Belial and Mammon for "ignoble ease and peaceful sloth;" but the assembly ultimately resolves

to seek for revenge by an assault upon the newly created earth. Satan himself adventures the dangerous journey through chaos, while the apostate angels occupy themselves in exploring the confines of their new abode, in boisterous games, or in high reasonings

‘Of Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,  
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.’

Meanwhile, at Hell-Gate, Satan is confronted by his loathsome and horrible offspring, Sin and Death, who guard the portals of that realm of woe. Through the opened gate he passes into the ‘dark illimitable ocean’ of Chaos—

‘Into this wild abyss,  
The womb of nature and perhaps her grave,  
Of neither sea, nor shore, nor air, nor fire,  
But all these in their pregnant causes mix’d  
Confusedly, and which thus must ever fight,  
Unless th’ Almighty Maker them ordain  
His dark materials to create more worlds ;  
Into this wild abyss the wary fiend  
Stood on the brink of Hell and look’d awhile,  
Pondering his voyage ; for no narrow frith  
He had to cross.

\* \* \* \* \*

At last his sail-broad vans  
He spreads for flight, and in the surging smoke  
Uplifted spurns the ground ; thence many a league,  
As in a cloudy chair, ascending rides  
Audacious.’

At last—climbing, wading, flying—now borne aloft by fierce winds, now falling thousands of fathoms—he reaches the confines of the kingdom of darkness, and sees far off the star-like glimmer of the new-created universe, and the shining battlements of the everlasting heaven.

The third book opens with a dialogue in heaven, setting

forth the Divine scheme of Redemption. Meanwhile, Satan alights on the outer surface of the universe, and plunging through the opening, through which the angels come and go, appears, disguised as a young angel from heaven, to Uriel the Sun-spirit, who directs him to the earth, where he alights on Mount Niphates.

Here we reach a great crisis in the development of the drama. The stern debate of the fallen archangel with himself, in view of the new universe that he has proposed to ruin, culminates in fresh defiance of the Almighty :

‘ All hope excluded thus, behold instead  
Of us outeast, exiled, his new delight,  
Mankind created, and for him this world.  
So farewell hope, and with hope farewell fear,  
Farewell remorse : all good to me is lost ;  
Evil be thou my good ; by thee at least  
Divided empire with Heaven’s King I hold ;  
By thee, and more than half perhaps will reign ;  
As Man ere long and this new world shall know.’

Then from the vast circuit of infinity, of boundless Chaos below, and the limitless Empyrean above, we pass through the ‘green enclosure of delicious Paradise’ rich with lavish wealth of beauty scattered in luxurious profusion under the smile of Heaven. Amid the delights and strange living creatures of this new-created garden appear our first parents :

‘ Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,  
Godlike erect, with native honour clad,  
In naked majesty seem’d lords of all,  
And worthy seem’d ; for in their looks divine  
The image of their glorious Maker shone,  
Truth, wisdom, sanctitude severe and pure.’

All evil passions of jealousy and despair are stirred in the fiend at the sight of so much bliss :

‘ Aside the Devil turn’d  
 For envy, yet with jealous leer malign  
 Eyed them askance, and to himself thus ‘plain’d.  
 Sight hateful ! sight tormenting ! thus these two  
 Imparadised in one another’s arms,  
 The happier Eden, shall enjoy their fill  
 Of bliss on bliss ; while I to Hell am thrust,  
 Where neither joy nor love, but fierce desire,  
 Among our other torments not the least,  
 Still unfulfilled with pain of longing pines.’

When night comes on, ‘squat like a toad close at the ear of Eve,’ the tempter tries to raise in dreams ‘vain hopes, vain aims, inordinate desires.’ Here the watching angels find him, and Satan, towering to the sky, defies the angelic host to combat. But to avert the conflict the Eternal holds out in Heaven the golden scales :

‘ The Fiend looked up and knew  
 His mounted scale aloft : nor more ; but fled  
 Murmuring, and with him fled the shades of night.’

It is in the fifth book, in our opinion, that the splendour and luxuriance of Milton’s inspiration begins to flag. The dialogue that occupies the next four books, though full of passages of matchless beauty, hardly reaches the same uniform level of vigour and majesty as the earlier scenes. The book opens with the morning hymn of praise sung by the awakened dwellers in Paradise, after they have discussed the strange dreams that have haunted Eve’s sleep. Meanwhile, Raphael is sent down to earth by Heaven’s High King to warn the human pair of their danger :

‘ He sees  
 Not unconform to other shining globes,  
 Earth and the gard’n of God, with cedars crown’d  
 Above all hills. As when by night the glass  
 Of Galileo, less assur’d, observes  
 Imagined lands and regions in the moon :



Or pilot, from amidst the Cyclades  
 Delos or Samos first appearing, kens  
 A cloudy spot. Down thither prone in flight  
 He speeds, and through the vast ethereal sky  
 Sails between worlds and worlds with steady wing  
 Now on the polar winds, then with quick fan  
 Winnows the buxom air ; till within soar  
 Of towering eagles, to all the fowls he seems  
 A phoenix, gaz'd by all, as that sole bird,  
 When to enshrine his reliques in the sun's  
 Bright temple, to Egyptian Thebes he flies.  
 At once on th' eastern cliff of Paradise  
 He lights, and to his proper shape returns  
 A seraph wing'd.'

He is hospitably entertained, and delivers his warning to Adam, telling him of the enemy who is plotting his ruin, and of the great revolt in heaven which hurled him to perdition. His narrative of the great three days' strife in heaven occupies the sixth book. The Titanic struggle is full of echoes of Homeric war, but here Milton is betrayed by his lack of humour into a grotesque picture of the diabolical artillery,

'A triple row of mounted pillars laid  
 On wheels,'

discharging, with smoke and flame,

'Iron globes, which on the victor host  
 Level'd, with such impetuous fury smote,  
 That whom they hit, none on their feet might stand.'

The derisive humour of Satan and his associates is incongruous to the verge of bathos. Nor is this incongruity much relieved when the cannon are submerged under uprooted hills, tossed about in horrid confusion. But in the issue of the conflict there is nothing unworthy of the sublimity of the subject. The coming forth of the chariot

of Messiah is more than Homeric; it is touched with the majestic splendour of the visions of the Hebrew prophet, who saw by the river Chebar the revelation of the Almighty. The description of the Creation, almost a paraphrase of the account in Genesis, is yet full of exquisite touches of poetic fancy. In the eighth book Adam describes his own awakening to conscious life, and the divine provision of a consort and helpmeet for him. Milton has not escaped the subtle influence that permeated the literature of his age, and the trail of sensuality is over the human love of Paradise.

The ninth book opens with an exordium justifying the poet's choice of the theme of the fall of man in preference to a romantic subject gathered from British history, such as he had once proposed to himself. The argument is, he asserts, not less but more heroic than that of the great epics of antiquity :

‘ If answerable style I can obtain  
Of my celestial patroness, who deigns  
Her nightly visitation unimplor'd,  
And dictates to me slumbering, or inspires  
Easy my unpremeditated verse :  
Since first this subject for heroic song  
Pleased me long choosing, and beginning late,  
Not sedulous by nature to indite  
Wars, hitherto the only argument  
Heroic deem'd, chief mastery to dissect  
With long and tedious havoc fabled knights  
In battles feign'd ; the better fortitude  
Of patience and heroic martyrdom  
Unsung, or to describe races and games  
Or tilting furniture, emblazon'd shields,  
Impresses quaint, caparisons and steeds ;  
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights  
At joust and tournament, then marshall'd feast  
Served up in hall with sewers and seneschals ;  
The skill of artifice or office mean,

Not that which justly gives heroic name  
 To person or to poem. Me of these  
 Nor skill'd nor studious, higher argument  
 Remains, sufficient of itself to raise  
 That name, unless an age too late, or cold  
 Climate, or years damp my intended wing  
 Depress'd, and much they may if all be mine,  
 Not hers who brings it nightly to my ear.'

It is characteristic of Milton's view of the relation of the sexes that Eve's temptation comes through a little act of petulant resistance to marital authority. The almost childish wilfulness of her determination to go out by herself, and Adam's grave and reluctant consent, are surely echoes from the days when the insubordination of Milton's young wife disturbed the quiet of his studious life.

'What thou bid'st  
 Unargued I obey; so God ordains;  
 God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more  
 Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise.'

This is the Miltonic conception of a woman's proper attitude towards her husband, and the self-assertion of his spouse is disturbing to the 'domestic Adam.' The nobleness of the man appears when the fatal step has been taken, and he resolves that he will share the doom of disobedience with her with whom he has shared the joys of Paradise. But oh, the pity and the pathos of that awakening to the realization of sin!

The issues of the disobedience are developed in the tenth book. Sin and Death sweep through the universe, blasting all worlds as they go, to claim the fallen earth as their prey. Divinely appointed changes in the course of nature, outbreaks of strife and discord among beasts and fowls, bitter self-reproach and wild counsels of self-destruction in the fallen pair—all tell of forfeited Paradise. Meanwhile the seeming triumph of the powers of

evil is visited on them in swift judgment, and Hell becomes the loathsome habitation of hissing horrid serpents, tormented by refreshing fruit that turns to soot and cinders in the jaws.

With the prayer of penitence with which the human sinners seal their acceptance of the doom that has fallen on them, the issue of the tragedy is complete. But two more books follow, for Michael descends to reveal to Adam the course of human history—the coming of the promised seed to bruise the serpent's head. In the closing scene—the last farewell to the lost Paradise—Milton reaches a climax of poetic power. The dazzling cherubim gathering like evening mists that pursue the steps of the returning labourer, the "hastening angel" leading the lingering feet of the exiles, the peace shining through the sorrow from the broadening hope beyond, form a scene that will linger in our memories for ever.

Nothing shows Milton's strength more than the ordered majesty of the imagery which sustains the height of the great argument. There is not a simile in the poem that is trivial or meaningless, scarcely one that does not add dignity to the conception it illustrates. They are wrought into the framework of the poem with splendid absence of apparent effort, and never lead the imagination away from the purpose they are introduced to serve. Yet they are not mere suggestions, but complete pictures, full of vivid touches of reality. Thus, for instance, when the hounds that tear the vitals of sin are compared to those that follow the flight of the witch, the simile is elaborated with every circumstance of horror that can give intensity to the picture:

‘ Nor uglier follow the night-hag, when call’d  
In secret, riding through the air she comes,  
Lured with the smell of infant blood, to dance

With Lapland witches, while the labouring moon  
Eclipses at their charms.'

Or again, when Satan struggles through the "boggy Syrtis" of Chaos it is:

'As when a gryphon through the wilderness  
With winged course, o'er hill or moory dale,  
Pursues the Arimasian, who by stealth  
Had from his wakeful custody purloined  
The guarded gold.'

The earlier books of *Paradise Lost*, especially, abound in such images as these—vast, horrible, or magnificent.

Not less notable is Milton's art in the use of proper names, perhaps only equalled in Vergil. How full of musical sound and historical associations is such a passage as this:

'Though all the giant brood  
Of Phlegra with th' heroic race were join'd  
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side  
Mix'd with auxiliar Gods; and what resounds  
In fable or romance of Uther's son  
Begirt with British and Armoric knights;  
And all who since, baptized or infidel,  
Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,  
Damasco, or Morocco, or Trebisonde,  
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore,  
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell  
By Fontarabbia.'

The first book is especially full of names suggestive of a vague remoteness and mystery.

'The language of the poem,' says Mr. Pattison, 'is the elaborated outcome of all the best words of all antecedent poetry, the language of one who lives in the companionship of the great and the wise of all ages.'

The prefatory note on *The Verse*, added by Milton to the

later issue of the first edition, is clearly intended as a contribution to the controversy then raging between the advocates of rhyme and blank verse for dramatic purposes.

‘This neglect of rime is so little to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it is rather to be esteemed an example, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming.’

So, even in the structure of his poem, Milton is still contending for liberty—liberty to move in stately and majestic periods, as far removed from the diffuseness of later Elizabethan blank verse as from the stiffness and formality of the heroic couplets of the Restoration period.

Much has been written on the metre of *Paradise Lost*, and the general principles of its structure are now fairly well understood; but even an age that has produced such masters of blank verse as Shelley and Tennyson has been content to take the verse of Milton as the utmost measure of attainable excellence in metrical form. It is flexible without being diffuse, stately without being ponderous, elaborated without being artificial—combining in a unique degree melodious sweetness and virile strength.

‘*Paradise Regained* is,’ says Mr. Pattison, ‘probably the most unadorned poem extant in any language.’ Its severe simplicity, contrasting strongly with the richness of *Paradise Lost*, may perhaps be in part due to the fact that the later poem was an after-thought composed in a comparatively short time, under the stimulus of a sudden impulse. But it is probable that Milton deliberately set himself to tell the story of the Temptation with no adventitious outward adornments to detract from the grandeur of its lesson.

The Satan of the later poem is a mere shadow of the

great archangel, majestic even in his fall, who is the central figure of the opening books of *Paradise Lost*. Even more indistinct is the figure of Christ, as he appears in the poem. It is only in the subsidiary scenes that Milton has set his imagination free from its self-imposed restrictions. The vision of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them in the third and fourth books recalls the majestic richness of *Paradise Lost*, and in stray lines throughout the poem we catch the same Miltonic note. But the beauty of *Paradise Regained* as a whole is different in kind from that of the earlier poem; and though eminent critics are at one in attesting its artistic perfection, it has never won the same measure of popular admiration as *Paradise Lost*.

Milton seems to have been conscious that his later poem appealed to a small and select class. As Phillips records, 'he could not bear with patience *Paradise Regained* censured to be much inferior to *Paradise Lost*,' in this, as in so many other ways, showing his scholarly contempt for the verdict of the uncultured public.

Of necessity the poem is rather a splendid fragment than a complete epic. Satan and his angels are not cast out, nor is man restored to the forfeited delights of Paradise. One blow is struck in the great contest: the obedience of Christ baffles and overcomes the tempter, who had seduced our first parents into disobedience. Then the poem closes with Christ's return to his mother's house, brought on his way with joy by attendant choirs of angels.

There is no reason to believe that Milton ever intended to carry on the story further. The temptation was the vindication of the obedience of Christ, and in that obedience, manifested even unto death, lay the promise of final restoration. But at the time that Milton was writing, with the bacchanalian orgies of the restored Court in full progress



around him, the end of the conflict seemed still far off; and while in *Paradise Regained* there breathes the strong faith of the prophet in the ultimate triumph of good, *Samson Agonistes* is the expression of the bitterness of the disappointed idealist, who had seen his hopes crumble away, and found himself alone in the midst of scoffers and idolaters. It is impossible to doubt that throughout the drama Milton had the circumstances of his own life in his mind. Samson's marriage with a Philistine woman, his fruitless contest for the liberty of his nation, the isolation and blindness of his closing days—all these had their counterpart in the life of the poet, and though he could not feel, like the captive champion of Israel, that his own folly had brought about his downfall, the bitter reproaches that Samson heaps upon 'Israel's governors and heads of tribes,' are the echo of Milton's resentment against the nation that had fallen back to 'the abjured and detested thralldom of Kingship.'

As an autobiographical fragment, the tragedy is invested with a peculiar pathos. We almost forget at times that it is Samson who is speaking, so unmistakably does the personality of the poet break through the conventional setting of the drama. How vividly, for instance, does Milton's own position come before us in Samson's lament over his blindness:

'Blind among enemies, O worse than chains,  
Dungeon, or beggary, or decrepit age !  
Light the prime work of God to me is extinct,  
And all her various objects of delight  
Annull'd, which might in part my grief have eas'd,  
Inferior to the vilest now become  
Of man or worm ; the vilest here excel me,  
They creep, yet see ; I dark in light, expos'd  
To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,  
Within doors, or without, still as a fool

In power of others, never in my own ;  
Scarce half I seem to live, dead more than half.  
O dark, dark, dark, amid the blaze of noon,  
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse  
Without all hope of day !'

The tragedy is cast in the strictest classical mould. It is clear cut, strong, at times almost harsh in its severe intensity; Greek in form, but vitalized by the inspiration of the Hebrew prophets. Here is the eternal protest of the human soul against the baffling and inscrutable dislocation of the world, the protest that found its earliest and noblest expression in the drama of *Job*. In the Greek tragedians the note of despair predominates, but in *Samson*, as in *Job*, faith is justified in the issue of the contest.

As has often been pointed out, the chorus in *Samson Agonistes* bears the same close relation to the development of the plot as in the tragedies of Sophocles. Its moral generalizations explain, without interrupting, the purpose of the tragedy, and give coherence to the scattered hints and allusions of the dialogue. In form, these choral odes are rugged, occasionally even uncouth; stronger but less sweet than the lyrical verses of Milton's earlier poetical period. In the construction of the tragedy he has followed closely the account of Samson in the book of Judges, but his strict adhesion to the 'unities' of time, place, and action, obliged him to develop the plot by dialogue rather than by incident.' His only important addition to the Scriptural narrative—the introduction of the giant Hapha helps to sustain the action of the drama where it begins to flag, and forms a link in the chain of events leading on to the final catastrophe. After the exit of Samson the tragedy becomes more intense, and the dialogue moves on in unflinching strength to the close.

In *Comus* Milton had shown the spirit of corruption, that threatened to dominate Church and State, vanquished by the power of virtue and purity; now, in the drama of his old age, Puritanism appears as the blind and discredited champion of Divine Vengeance, condemned to bear the insolent defiance of the Harapha of brute secular force, and the subtler mockery of the Dalila of religious seductions. Unconquered, though unable to achieve the deliverance that had once seemed within its grasp, the Puritan party might yet hope to strike one more blow for freedom, and perish in the overthrow of its enemies.

When, therefore, Milton issued his last two poems together, he laid before the vanquished adherents of the Commonwealth a great alternative. On the one side was the victory of patience and self-repression—the Divine overcoming of evil with good; on the other hand was the triumph of revenge—swift, merciless, irresistible; and though the poet leaves the scales balanced between the two, his own old age testified that he had chosen the better part—to obey, to be patient, and to hope.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DRAMATIC POETS.

THE death of Ben Jonson in 1637 brought to a close the great age of the Elizabethan Dramatists. Webster had died in 1630, Chapman and Marston in 1634, and Dekker not long after. But the days of its splendour had passed away with the deaths of Shakespeare and Fletcher, while the broadening burlesque of its comedy, the overstrained horror of its tragedy, and a certain undefinable atmosphere of unreality that pervaded it, all gave token that its decay had begun. To trace the course of this decline belongs to the history of the preceding period; its results are apparent in the work of the three dramatists of note who continued to write during the later years of the reign of Charles I.—Massinger, Ford, and Shirley.

Philip Massinger—‘modest and manly Massinger,’ as Mr. Masson calls him—was born in 1584, the son of a gentleman in the service of the Earl of Pembroke, and entered St. Alban’s Hall, Oxford, in 1602. In 1606, he quitted the university, but whether on account of his father’s death, or his own conversion to the Roman Catholic faith, is doubtful. He came to London, and there we almost lose sight of him for fifteen years, the only record of his life during this period being a pathetic, and happily successful, request to Henslowe for five pounds to secure release from

a debtor's prison. He seems to have helped Fletcher and other dramatists, but to what extent is uncertain. In 1621 he composed a Comedy entitled *The Woman's Plot*, which was performed at Court, and from this time to the close of his life Massinger was a prolific writer of dramas. He died in 1639, and was buried at St. Saviour's Church, Southwark, in the same grave in which the remains of his friend Fletcher had been laid fourteen years before.

Eighteen plays, wholly or in part by Massinger, have survived, and it is probable that these adequately represent his best and most characteristic work. Of those written in collaboration the earliest and best is *The Virgin Martyr*, written in conjunction with Dekker, and printed in 1622. *The Fatal Dowry*, written in conjunction with Field, is a drama of much less note, and *The Old Law*, in which Massinger is said to have co-operated with Middleton and Rowley, probably only owes to him a few emendations. Of Massinger's own plays, the two earliest, *The Unnatural Combat* and *The Duke of Milan*, though containing some noble passages and powerful scenes, are glaringly improbable, and regarded as dramatic compositions, utterly defective. *The Bondman* and *The Renegade* show some advance in construction; the former especially, only falling short of high excellence through the comparative weakness of its conclusion. *The Roman Actor*, licensed in 1626, must rank as one of Massinger's masterpieces. He himself 'ever held it as the most perfect birth of his Minerva.' The Roman actor Paris, under the patronage of Domitian, defends the dignity of his art against the hostility of the Senate, but falls a victim to the jealousy of the Emperor, whose mistress, Domitia, has become infatuated with him. The murder of Paris by Domitian, a tragedy within a tragedy—for the event is represented as occurring while both are taking part in a dramatic performance—is finely

conceived, as is also the fall of Domitian, with which the drama closes. The atmosphere of the play is one of dignity rather than of passion, and the character of Domitian, though impressive, is somewhat wanting in individuality; yet among classical plays of this period *The Roman Actor* deservedly occupies a high place.

*The Great Duke of Florence* (1627) also ranks high among Massinger's plays. Though there is little humour in the comedy, it is pervaded by an unusual delicacy and lightness of touch. The date of *The Maid of Honour* is uncertain, but it probably belongs to the same year as the last play. It is well constructed and interesting, and ends in a somewhat unexpected *dénouement*; for on the outcome of the complex love intrigues in which the hero and heroine become involved, Camiola takes the veil as a nun, while Bertoldo renews his vows of celibacy as a knight of Malta. *The Picture* and *The Emperor of the East* are less noteworthy. The latter, which was produced at Court, contains some rather bold lines against royal claims to arbitrary power, which have been thought to imply Massinger's sympathy with the popular cause:

‘ You roar out  
All is the King's, his will above his laws;  
And that fit tributes are too gentle yokes  
For his poor subjects,’ etc.

Massinger's next Comedy, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, (1633) has deservedly retained its popularity for theatrical purposes to our own day. Much of this popularity is due to the character of Sir Giles Overreach, whose prosperity and overthrow give just that kind of dramatic satisfaction which is wanting in most of the later Elizabethan plays. The old miser, watching with grim satisfaction the victims struggling in the meshes of his net, is a powerfully drawn and intensely living personality. Overreach's madness is

too incidental to be an adequate close to the drama, the general moral purpose of which is set forth in Lord Lovel's speech :

' Hard things are compass'd oft by easy means,  
And judgment being a gift derived from heaven,  
Though sometimes lodged in the hearts of worldly men,  
That ne'er consider from whom they receive it,  
Forsakes such as abuse the giver of it.  
Which is the reason that the politic  
And cunning statesman, that believes he fathoms  
The counsels of all kingdoms on the earth,  
Is by simplicity oft over-reach'd.'

In *The City Madam* the central character, Luke Fingal, scarcely perhaps deserves Hallam's description of him as a 'masterly delineation;' but as a study in contemporary manners of low-class society the play has a certain interest, and comes nearer to true comedy than any other of Massinger's dramas. *The Guardian* and *A Very Woman* require no special notice, but *The Bashful Lover*, though wanting in warmth and intensity of feeling, is distinguished by general elevation of sentiment, and especially by the noble character of Hortensio, whose modest but generous love for Princess Matilda gives its title to the play. *Believe as you List* (1631) was the last of Massinger's surviving plays. The licenser refused to sanction it, owing to some supposed reference in the history of the hero to the deposition of Sebastian, King of Portugal,—'there being a peace sworn 'twixt the Kings of England and Spain.' After having been lost for two centuries it was discovered in 1844, and published. It is a classical tragedy, chiefly notable for the character of Antiochus, the deposed and exiled King of Carthage, whose dignified endurance of the buffets of Fortune stands in fine contrast to the bustling villainy of the Roman ambassador Flaminius.



Massinger's wide range of subjects, the ingenuity and skill with which most of his plays are constructed, and the forcible rhetoric of his dialogues, entitle him to a high place in the group of dramatists that includes Webster, Middleton, and Dekker. The claim to a higher place, which has sometimes been put forward on his behalf, may not improbably have arisen from the fact that his works were efficiently edited earlier than those of most of the later Elizabethan dramatists. If he rarely sinks below a certain level of excellence, he seldom startles us with any sudden flash of inspiration. A tone of sombreness, which passes at times into one of sadness, pervades his entire work; and even in his comedies it is but a transient smile that flickers at rare intervals over the face of one whose moral purpose has grown through the discipline of poverty. A certain didactic aim is indeed rarely absent, although seldom unduly prominent, and if it is undeniable that his dramas are at times grossly indecent and overstrained in their delineation of vice and villainy, we are conscious that behind them there is a sane and healthy mind with a manly respect for virtue and goodness.

Though Massinger has left no single tragedy that deserves to rank with *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, he was perhaps strongest in romantic tragedy. *The Duke of Milan*, which Professor Minto considers 'by far his greatest drama,' contains, it is true, some isolated passages which catch the note of real passion, but in the character of Sforza we wholly lose the 'inevitableness' with which our greatest dramatists know how to give consistency to the most improbable characters and situations. *The Great Duke of Florence*, though on a much lower level of tragic intensity, shows Massinger at his best, working out a simple plot with ingenuity and freshness.

But it is in his characterization that the dramatist's

limitations are most clearly seen, for it is here that the signs of effort are most apparent. He has scarcely any share of that instinctive knowledge of human nature in which Shakespeare stands supreme; and so we never lose the consciousness that his actors are playing their parts on the stage, and will presently change their costumes and go home. They confess their passion, lay bare their villainy, or defend their virtue in language that is too appropriate to be convincing, too carefully constructed to open the abyss of passion or 'loose the fount of tears.'

Massinger's verse is facile and vigorous, but often careless and prosaic. His lines sometimes overlap in such a way that, if printed consecutively, their rhythm would scarcely be noticed. The following, from *The Unnatural Combat*, will serve as an illustration :

' I shall, Sir,  
But in a perplex'd form and method, which  
You only can interpret. Would you had not  
A guilty knowledge in your bosom, of  
The language which you force me to deliver  
So I were nothing !'

It is probably due to Massinger's 'fatal facility' that there are scarcely a dozen lines in all his extant dramas that have power to arrest our attention or linger in our memory. The art that could condense a whole world of poetic thought into one strong line had well nigh died out in the Caroline dramatic period. But though wanting in the highest characteristics of poetry, Massinger's verse is full of excellence of a lower order—pleasing imagery, facility of expression and rhetorical force, and excels that of most of his contemporaries in clearness and unaffectedness of style.

A passage from the first scene of *The Great Duke of Florence*, in which Giovanni laments the social law that

forbids his marriage with Lydia, the beautiful daughter of his tutor, may serve to illustrate the poet's gentle manner.

*Giov.* Greatness, with private men,  
Esteemed a blessing, is to me a curse ;  
And we who, for our high births, they conclude  
The only freemen, are the only slaves.  
Happy the golden mean ! had I been born  
In a poor sordid cottage, not nursed up  
With expectation to command a court,  
I might, like such of your condition, sweetest,  
Have ta'en a safe and middle course, and not,  
As I am now, against my choice compelled  
Or to lie grovelling on the earth or raised  
So high upon the pinnacles of state,  
That I must either keep my height with danger,  
Or fall with certain ruin.

*Lyd.* Your own goodness  
Will be your faithful guard.

*Giov.* O, Lydia !

*Cont.* So passionate !

*Giov.* For, had I been your equal,  
I might have seen and liked with mine own eyes,  
And not, as now, with others ; I might still,  
And without observation, or envy,  
As I have done, continued my delights,  
With you, that are alone, in my esteem,  
The abstract of society : we might walk  
In solitary groves, or in choice gardens ;  
From the variety of curious flowers  
Contemplate nature's workmanship and wonders :  
And then, for change, near to the murmur of  
Some bubbling fountain, I might hear you sing,  
And, from the well-tuned accents of your tongue,  
In my imagination conceive  
With what melodious harmony a quire  
Of angels sing above their Maker's praises.  
And then with chaste discourse as we returned,  
Imp feathers to the broken wings of Time :—  
And all this I must part from !

As an example of Massinger's treatment of tragic and intense emotion, may be quoted Sforza's last words, spoken by the corpse of his murdered wife Marcella, in the terrible closing scene of *The Duke of Milan* :

' *Sfor.* She was ever kind,  
 And her displeasure, though called on, short-lived  
 Upon the least submission. O you Powers,  
 That can convey our thoughts to one another  
 Without the aid of eyes or ears, assist me ! [Kneels.  
 Let her behold me in a pleasing dream  
 Thus, on my knees before her ; (yet that duty  
 In me is not sufficient) ; let her see me.  
 Compel my mother, from whom I took life,  
 And this my sister, partner of my being,  
 To bow thus low unto her ; let her hear us  
 In my acknowledgment freely confess  
 That we in a degree as high are guilty  
 As she is innocent. Bite your tongues, vile creatures,  
 And let your inward horror fright your souls  
 For having belied that pureness, to come near which  
 All women that posterity can bring forth  
 Must be, though striving to be good, poor rivals.  
 And for that dog Francisce, that seduced me,  
 In wounding her, to rase a temple built  
 To chastity and sweetness, let her know  
 I'll follow him to hell, but I will find him,  
 And there live a fourth Fury to torment him.  
 Then, for this cursèd hand and arm that guided  
 The wicked steel, I'll have them, joint by joint,  
 With burning irons seared off, which I will eat ;  
 I being a vulture fit to taste such carrion.'

Two lines of a contemporary satire supply us with the only information we have as to the appearance and character of the reserved and unsociable barrister, John Ford :

John Ford  
 (1586-1640 ?).

' Deep in a dump John Ford alone has got  
 With folded arms and melancholy hat.'

He was born in 1586, the younger son of a Devonshire

gentleman of independent means, and entered at the Middle Temple in 1602. His first published work was *Fame's Memorial*, an elegiac poem on the Earl of Devonshire, whose death had followed soon after a marriage which created no small amount of public scandal. The poem is chiefly notable as shewing Ford's independence of spirit, a feature indeed, which, in the dedications of his plays reaches almost to ostentation. He wrote several dramas in collaboration, of which *The Sun's Darling* (Ford and Dekker) and *The Witch of Edmonton* (Ford, Dekker and Rowley) alone remain. Of the plays of which he may claim the entire authorship, five only of those which have come down to us are of any considerable note. The earliest of these, *The Lover's Melancholy*, was printed in 1629, having been acted during the preceding year. More pathetic and less charged with horror than Ford's maturer work, it reaches a harmonious climax with the last scene, where Meleander is restored from his madness by the recovery of his daughter, a close which contrasts favourably with the culminating horror of his next play, *'Tis a Pity she's a Whore*. Here Ford is at his best—and worst. He is the dramatist of passion—passion that neither inspires or ennobles; but drives on its victims with the awful force of irresistible destiny. Lost souls, struggling in the maelstrom of over-mastering fate, with no issue possible but self-destruction; and here and there a 'despicable buffoon' to make coarse and insane jests—these are the elements of Ford's tragedy. The theme of the play is repulsive; it affords the most characteristic example of that straining after the fantastic and extraordinary, which marked the close of a literary period that seemed to have exhausted the simpler possibilities of tragedy. In *The Broken Heart* intensity of sorrow rather than of passion is the leading motif. The construction of the plot, which is too complex

to admit of being briefly summarized, shows considerable skill, and gives rise to particular scenes that thrill with an agony of sadness. The murder of Ithocles by Orgilus beside the corpse of the broken-hearted Penthea, and the death of Calantha at the close of the ball which she will not interrupt though her father, lover and friend have died, are both developed with tremendous power; and the tragedy closes with a melodious dirge sung, with responsive choir, over the 'Broken heart that has wedded the Lifeless Trunk' in death :

- ' *Chor.*      Glories, pleasures, pomps, delight and ease  
                  Can but please  
                  Th' outward senses, when the mind  
                  Is or untroubled or by peace refin'd—  
*1st voice.*    Crowns may flourish and decay,  
                  Beauty shine, but fade away.  
*2nd voice.*    Youth may revel, yet it must  
                  Lie down in a bed of dust.  
*3rd voice.*    Earthly honours flow and waste,  
                  Time alone doth change and last.  
*Chor.*        Sorrows mingled with contents prepare  
                  Rest for care :  
                  Love only reigns in death, though art  
                  Can find no comfort for a broken heart.'

*Love's Sacrifice* (1633), is a powerful study of the reckless passion of a woman. Though 'generally well received on representation' the drama is badly constructed, and in its subsidiary parts coarse and ineffective. Ford's two remaining dramas, *Fancies Chaste and Noble*, and *The Lady's Trial* are both third-rate comedies. *Perkin Warbeck*, printed in 1634, is a more notable production. As the last attempt at historical drama it suffers by contrast with the masterpieces of Shakespeare, but its merits are considerable, and entirely different from those of Ford's other works. The tragedy is founded on Bacon's *Life of*

*Henry the Seventh*, and the character of the monarch is developed with skill and discretion. The play, interesting, dignified, and occasionally humorous, seems to indicate that Ford's genius was capable of a wider range than his prevailing melancholy allowed. We doubt, indeed, whether more to wonder that he should have written one such play, or that, having written one, he should have written no more. After the publication of *The Lady's Trial*, in 1638, we lose all trace of Ford, the time and place of his death being alike uncertain.

In the delineation of the strongest human passions—love, grief, revenge—Ford is without a peer among the later Elizabethan dramatists. He seeks, in his own words, to

‘ Sing out a lamentable tale of things,  
Done long ago, and ill done ; and when sighs  
Are wearied, piece up what remains behind  
With weeping eyes and hearts that bleed to death.’

He has no dramatic reserve, and shrinks from no touch of horror that can add intensity to the situation. It is in this that his want of due restraint betrays itself. A sane and healthy mind revolts instinctively from such scenes as that in which the reeking heart of Annabella is borne into the banquet-hall on the dagger of Giovanni; they awaken neither pity nor indignation, nor that purifying rest in accomplished purpose, which is the highest end of tragedy. We are first stunned, then repelled, by the morbid fatalism of his greatest tragedies; they are like the hospital-museums where human deformities and distortions are catalogued and exhibited, and from which we long to escape into the fresh air and sunshine.

Two effective tests of a dramatist's power of characterization are his delineation of a humorous man and a virtuous woman—and here Ford fails notably. If Bianca, in *Love's Sacrifice*, is intended as a picture of virtue trium-





As a devoted servant ; and on Ithocles,  
 As if no brave, yet no unworthy enemy :  
 Nor did I use an engine to entrap  
 His life, out of a slavish fear to combat  
 Youth, strength, or cunning ; but for that I durst not  
 Engage the goodness of a cause on fortune,  
 By which his name might have outfaced my vengeance.  
 O, Tecnicus, inspired with Phœbus' fire !  
 I call to mind thy augury, 'twas perfect ;  
 " Revenge proves its own executioner."  
 When feeble man is bending to his mother,  
 The chest he was first framed on, thus he totters.

*Bass.* Life's fountain is dried up.

*Org.*

So falls the standard

Of my prerogative in being a creature !  
 A mist hangs o'er mine eyes, the sun's bright splendour  
 Is clouded in an everlasting shadow ;  
 Welcome, thou ice, that sitt'st about my heart  
 No heat can ever thaw thee.

[*Dies.*

*Near.*

Speech hath left him.

*Bass.* He hath shook hands with time ; his funeral urn  
 Shall be my charge : remove the bloodless body.  
 The coronation must require attendance :

That past, my few days can be but one mourning. [*Exeunt.*

James Shirley, the last of the great band of Elizabethan dramatists, was born in 1596, educated at Merchant Taylor's School, and at both universities, and ordained. After holding a clerical appointment for two years, he joined the Roman Catholic Church, and turned to the uncongenial work of a schoolmaster. In 1618, while at Cambridge, he had published a poem, now lost, entitled *Ecco, or The Unfortunate Lover*, and in 1625 he wrote his first drama, *Love's Tricks—a Comedy*. The play was successful, and Shirley abandoned his school and came to London, where for the next fifteen years he shared with Massinger the leading place among the English dramatists of the time. Over forty

James Shirley  
 (1596-1666).

plays are attributed wholly or in part to him, and the character of his work remains singularly level. Among his tragedies, *The Traitor*, licensed in 1631, and published four years later, deserves a foremost place. The play is grounded on actual events in the life of Lorenzino de Medici, whose assassination of Duke Alessandro is, in the play, followed by his own destruction. The infatuated duke, heedless in his passion of all dictates of honour and prudence; and the traitor, whose crafty machinations defy detection, till they involve his victim and himself in one common ruin, are both admirably represented.

*The Politician*, acted about 1639, and *The Cardinal*, licensed in 1641, are both well-conceived but inadequately executed plays; the rest of Shirley's tragedies hardly call for specific notice. Among his comedies the most interesting are those which deal with contemporary manners.

Such are *Hyde Park* (1632), *The Ball* (1632), *The Lady of Pleasure* (1633), and *The Gamester* (1633). Of this last Charles I. is said to have supplied the outline of the plot; and in spite of its grossness of tone, it is, in point of vigour, interest, and constructive ability, one of the best of Shirley's plays. *The Wedding* (1629), *The Grateful Servant*, and *The Young Admiral* (1633), are all ingeniously constructed comedies. *The Coronation* derives a special interest from the fact that it was originally attributed to Fletcher; it contains touches of poetic fancy which suggest at least the possibility of his co-operation, though the play, as a whole, is undoubtedly Shirley's.

Shirley enjoyed a considerable share of court patronage, and repaid the royal favour by devoted attachment to the Queen, the supposed attack on whom in Prynne's *Histriomastix* he bitterly resented. It was to him that the Inns of Court entrusted the preparation of the great masque, *The Triumph of Peace*, which was performed before the

King and Queen, with magnificent disregard of expense, in 1634. Three years later he accompanied Lord Strafford to Ireland, where he remained for two years. During this time he produced several plays for the Dublin Theatre; but the most interesting memento of his Irish visit is an eccentric combination of miracle-play and comedy, *St. Patrick for Ireland*, which contains some very beautiful passages, combined with much boisterous commonplace.

On the outbreak of the Civil War, Shirley joined the Earl of Newcastle, and took refuge with him in France on the defeat of the royal cause. On his return to England, his occupation as a playwright being gone, he turned again to teaching. Under the Commonwealth he ventured on the publication of three small volumes of masques and poems, but did not resume dramatic composition at the Restoration, which he survived for six years.

Shirley is in complete contrast with Ford in that he neither sought for over-strained and unnatural situations as a stimulus for his tragedy, nor allowed his comedy to degenerate into coarse buffoonery. Writing at the close of an extraordinarily prolific dramatic period, and at a time when the works of the great dramatists of that period were being made accessible in collected form, he drew freely from them for characters, situations, and ideas. But though there is little originality in his dramas, he shews great dexterity in the management of his material, and a facility of poetic expression which is pleasing until it grows monotonous. The plots of many of his plays are ingenious and interesting, and, as in the case of Massinger, a healthy moral tone underlies his occasional grossness.

Shirley's masques are of considerable literary value, and the few lyrics he wrote show him to be a lyric poet of mean power. 'The Glories of our Blood and State,' which appears in the masque, *The Contention of Ajax and Ulysses*,

is too familiar to be quoted, but the following, from a masque entitled *Cupid and Death*, though less known, is scarcely inferior.

‘THE COMMON DOOM.

‘Victorious men of earth, no more  
Proclaim how wide your empires are ;  
Though you bind in every shore,  
And your triumphs reach as far  
As night or day.  
Yet you, proud monarchs, must obey  
And mingle with forgotten ashes, when  
Death calls you to the crowd of common men.

‘Devouring famine, plague, and war,  
Each able to undo mankind,  
Death’s servile emissaries are ;  
Nor to these alone confined,  
He hath at will  
More quaint and subtle ways to kill.  
A smile, a kiss, as he will use the art,  
Shall have the cunning skill to break a heart.’

William D’Avenant, whom indeed Mr. Masson inclines to place above Shirley among Caroline dramatists, deserves at least the next place. The son of an Oxford inn-keeper, he entered the service of the Countess of Richmond as a page, and subsequently passed to that of Lord Brooke. He thus made the acquaintance of many of the young nobles at the Court, among whom he soon won a reputation as a wit and verse-writer. His first play, *Albovine*, was produced in 1629, and two tragi-comedies, *The Cruel Brother*, and *The Just Italian* followed soon after. Altogether, he wrote about a dozen plays before the closing of the theatres in 1642, and also composed several masques for production at Court, *Britannia Triumphans* (1637) being

perhaps the best. On the death of Ben Jonson, D'Avenant was, by the special request of the Queen, appointed Poet Laureate. Though he made no attempt to assert a like despotic authority over the literary world to that which his predecessor had exercised, he filled the office, both under Charles I. and after the Restoration, with dignity and ability, notwithstanding a physical disfigurement which moved alike the ridicule and the sympathy of the Court wits.<sup>1</sup> Soon after the meeting of the Long Parliament, D'Avenant was imprisoned for complicity in the Army Plot, but succeeded in making his escape to France. Returning on the outbreak of the Civil War, he took service under the Earl of Newcastle, and was knighted for his valour at the siege of Gloucester. On the failure of the royal cause, he took up his residence in Paris and there commenced his ponderous epic, *Gondibert*, which will be noticed in a later chapter. He subsequently fell into the hands of Parliament, and narrowly escaped execution—his escape having been due, it is said, to the intercession of Milton, on whose behalf he was afterwards destined, in turn, to exert his influence at the Restoration. After two years' imprisonment D'Avenant was set free, and in 1656 obtained permission to produce, at Rutland House, Aldersgate Street, an 'Entertainment of Declamations and Music.' Encouraged by the success of this experiment, he ventured to advertise the performance of a play, *The Siege of Rhodes*. To this composition a peculiar interest attaches, as having been 'practically the first opera produced in England; scenery was in this case for the first time employed in a play, as distinguished from a masque; and it introduced upon the stage the first

<sup>1</sup> 'In all the records either in verse or prose  
There was not one Laureate without a nose.'

English woman (Mrs. Coleman) who ever in an English drama appeared upon it.' Lawes, Milton's old collaborator and friend, supplied part of the music. The success of this experiment encouraged D'Avenant to move to the Cockpit, where *The History of Sir Francis Drake*, *The Cruelties of the Spaniards in Peru*, and other plays were produced. After the Restoration he held the office of Poet Laureate for eight years, and co-operated with Dryden in 'adapting' Shakespeare to the Restoration stage. His dramas were published by his widow in one large folio volume in 1673.

D'Avenant, like Shirley, forms a connecting link between the Elizabethan and the Restoration Drama. His plays are full of incident and careless melody, but do not show any real power of drawing characters or developing situations. Fletcher and Shakespeare are the formative influence of D'Avenant's dramatic attempts, his admiration for the latter leading him even to countenance, if he did not create, the scandal which connected him with the great dramatist in a closer relationship than that of god-parent. His efforts to preserve play-acting from extinction under the Commonwealth, and to hand down to the age of Dryden the traditions of the great dramatic period of his youth, give to D'Avenant a more substantial claim to the gratitude of posterity than is furnished by his plays or poems.

The fifteen surviving comedies by Richard Brome illustrate the kind of dramatic facility that can be acquired, with care and patience, by a man of average ability.

Richard Brome  
(d. 1652).

Beyond the fact that he had been a servant to Ben Jonson, scarcely anything is known about the life of their author. The *Jovial Crew*, a picture of the manners of a society of professional beggars, possibly suggested by Fletcher's *Beggar's Bush*, is perhaps the best of his plays.



*The Antipodes* and *The Northern Lass* also deserve specific mention, the one for the quaintness of its conception, the other for the pathetic fate of the heroine. Brome's dramas seem to have been acted with much success, and were collected and published in 1653, presumably after the death of the author, by one Alexander Brome, whose relationship to the dramatist is uncertain.

A more interesting member of Ben's adopted family was Thomas Randolph, who was born near Daventry in 1605, educated at Westminster and Trinity College, Cambridge, of which he became a fellow, and died at the age of thirty. His dramatic work, though immature, academic, and too strongly influenced by Ben Jonson, is indicative of considerable power. His best plays are *The Muses' Looking Glass*, a kind of dramatic satire, where the moral purpose of comedy is indicated in a series of altercations between personified abstractions, and a bright little pastoral drama *Amyntas, or The Impossible Dowry*, which was acted before the king at Whitehall, and was published in 1638. The former of these is really a series of dialogues rather than a drama, and the latter is hampered by the artificial character of its setting; but both have touches of true comedy, which raise them above the level of mere academic exercises.

Among the numerous minor dramatists of the age a few only are deserving of mention. Henry Glapthorne, after a short period of fame due to a laudatory article in the *Retrospective Review* of 1824, is now even more neglected than he deserves to be. Of his life scarcely a single fact is known. The five plays that are known to be his were written and acted between 1639 and 1643, and were revived with some success after the Restoration. The best is a pastoral tragedy, *Argalus and Parthenia*, founded on an episode in Sidney's *Arcadia*.

Minor  
Playwriters.

His *Albertus Wallenstein* is interesting as an attempt at historical tragedy, published only five years after the event—the murder of Wallenstein—with which it deals. The drama, however, is crude and ineffective, and wholly fails to rise to the possibilities of the subject. Fluent diction and occasional touches of vigour are the only merits that can be claimed for Glapthorne's plays.

Less admirable still as a dramatist is William Cartwright (1611-1631), a writer of panegyric verses and florid sermons, and a prominent member of 'the tribe of Ben,' who produced three tragi-comedies and one comedy, *The Ordinary*, an attempt at realistic drama after the manner of Jonson. At Court, and among the wits of the Caroline age, his reputation as a writer was very great, but neither his plays nor his poems deserve more than a passing notice among the literary products of the time.

Sir John Suckling, whose merits as a writer of light verse are discussed in the next chapter, produced three tragedies, of which the best is *Aglaura*. He also wrote one comedy, *The Goblins*, a sprightly but bewildering extravaganza, full of unexpected incidents and lively dialogue, carried on in slipshod and careless verse. *Aglaura* has the same breathless tumult of incidents, while it terminates in so ghastly a fashion that for representation at Court the author was fain to compose an alternative fifth act, which transforms the tragedy into a tragi-comedy.

Shakerley Marmion, who died in 1639, while returning from service in Suckling's troop against the Scots, wrote three plays, of which *The Antiquary* is the most notable. The humour of the comedy, though not of a high order, is pleasant and unobjectionable. A somewhat higher place must be accorded to Sir John Denham's only play, *The Sophy*. The scene of this tragedy is laid in Turkey, and

the pathetic dignity of the plot won for it immediate popularity. Prince Merza, blinded by his father, but recalled from thoughts of revenge by the appeal of his child, is a noble figure : and in its moral purpose, no less than in the careful construction of its verse, the play contrasts very favourably with most of the other tragedies of the Caroline age.

William Habington (1605-1654), the author of *Castara*, produced one play, a tragi-comedy, *The Queen of Arragon*, not deserving of notice as a drama, but containing some poetical passages.

Thomas May (1595-1650), the historian of the Long Parliament, who is said by Clarendon to have joined the Parliamentary side through chagrin at not being appointed successor to Ben Jonson as poet-laureate, was the author of several plays, of which the best are *The Old Couple* and *The Heir*. His verse is fluent and sometimes musical, but apart from this his plays possess no special merit.

It is unnecessary to do more than mention Jaspar Mayne (1604-1672), a clergyman and man of learning, who wrote two comedies ; Robert Davenport, whose best plays are a tragedy, *King John and Matilda*, and a comedy, *The City Nightcap* ; Thomas Rawlins, engraver of the Mint under Charles I. and Charles II., who was the author of a tragedy called *The Rebellion* ; and Thomas Nabbes, the author of many plays, of which an elaborate masque, *Microcosmos*, alone survives.

The closing of the theatres at the beginning of the Civil War brought to an end the greatest dramatic period in English history, and when they re-opened at the Restoration a new school arose, the treatment of which belongs to the age of Dryden.

## CHAPTER V.

### CAROLINE LYRICAL POETS.

THE lyrical poets of the reign of Charles I. form a group with strongly marked characteristics of its own. Many of them had sat at the feet of Ben Jonson, and caught something of his lyrical power; but the predominating influence among the younger men was that of Donne. The universities were at this time 'hotbeds of poetry,' and at the universities Donne's verses were eagerly read, and became the models for all aspiring poetasters. With their etherealized sensuality, strange and overwrought conceits, and careless richness of rhythm, they were among the earliest examples in England of that new school of poetry which Gongora had developed in Spain and Marini had perfected in Italy,—the first-fruits of that 'metaphysical' group of poets, whose extravagances produced the classical reaction which began with Cowley and Waller and culminated in the age of Dryden. All these Caroline lyrical poets belonged to the Cavalier party, and most of them lived to share its misfortunes. Both in the careless gaiety of Carew and Herrick, and in the religious fervour of Herbert and Crashaw, we may trace an undercurrent of protest against that gloomy Puritan asceticism which seemed to eliminate joy from life, and beauty from worship. The sense of delight in love and nature, in the worth and wonder of common things, that breaks at times through the incubus of metaphor and conceit in these lyrics, was the last pro-

test of an expiring age against the forces that were disintegrating the national life, and leaving the poet no choice but to trifle or be silent.

Thomas Carew, the first of these cavalier poets, was the younger son of Sir Matthew Carew, and a distant relation of Richard Carew, author of the delightful *Survey of Cornwall*. From Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he spent some time, not very creditably, he passed into the service of Sir Dudley Carleton, then ambassador at Venice, with whom he remained till 1616. After some years of roving life he returned to England, and was appointed *clerk in Ordinary* to Charles I., and a gentleman of the *Privy Chamber*. He became a close friend of D'Avenant and other leading wits of the court, and found congenial society among the 'sons of Ben' who gathered at the Apollo. More fortunate than some of his brother poets, he died before the storm of Civil war had burst, expressing on his deathbed a doubtless sincere repentance for the excesses of his life.

Carew's largest work was the masque, *Cælum Britannicum*, with the production of which the court had tried, in 1634, to outrival the magnificence of the performance of Shirley's *Triumph of Peace* at the Inns of Court. It is of but slight literary interest, the words being subordinated to elaborate scenic effects. But Carew also wrote a small number of poems, almost all short, in the style of amorous addresses then coming into vogue; and it is on these that his claim to a high place among lyrical poets rests. They are polished with the utmost care, and are marked by a cultivated grace exceeding that of most, if not all, the lyrical poets of his time. They are also 'reasonable,' in a sense in which those of Donne or Crawshaw are not. Carew's careful elaboration provoked the good-humoured ridicule of Suckling, who says of him :

‘ His Muse was hide-bound, and the issue of ’s brain  
Was seldom brought forth but with trouble and pain.’

It is true that in Carew’s verses there is little of Herrick’s freshness and unstudied grace, but there is a self-restraint and balance that is almost, if not quite, an adequate compensation.

Mr. Saintsbury sums up the special merits of the poet in his *Elizabethan Literature* :

‘ He is one of the most perfect masters of lyrical form in English poetry. . . . He has a delicacy, when he chooses to be delicate, which is quintessential, and a vigour which is thoroughly manly. Best of all, perhaps, he had the intelligence and self-restraint to make all his poems wholes, and not mere congeries of verses. There is always, both in the scheme of his meaning and the scheme of his metre, a definite plan of rise and fall, a concerted effect.’

His elegy on Donne is still one of the most masculine and vigorous elegiac poems in the language. The closing couplet is worthy of Dryden :

‘ Here lies a king that ruled as he thought fit  
The universal monarchy of wit.’

But Carew’s verses flow most freely when he sings of the joys of love and beauty in the short summer-time of life. The exquisitely musical poem entitled *A Deposition from Love* may be quoted as typical :

‘ I was foretold your rebel sex  
Nor love, nor pity knew,  
And with what scorn you used to vex  
Poor hearts that humbly sue ;  
Yet I believed, to crown our pain,  
Could we the fortress win,  
The happy lover sure would gain  
A paradise within ;

I thought Love's plagues, like dragons, sate  
Only to fright us at the gate.

'But I did enter and enjoy  
What happy lovers prove,  
For I could kiss, and sport, and toy,  
And taste those sweets of love,  
Which, if they had a lasting state,  
Or if in Celia's breast  
The force of love might not abate,  
Jove were too mean a guest.  
But now her breach of faith far more  
Afflicts, than did her scorn before.

'Hard fate ! to have been once possessed  
As victor of a heart,  
Achieved with labour and unrest,  
And then forced to depart.  
If the stout foe will not resign  
When I besiege a town,  
I lose but what was never mine ;  
But he that is cast down  
From enjoyed beauty, feels a woe  
Only deposéd kings can know.'

*The Rapture*, which some critics have pronounced Carew's best poem, is perhaps the most extreme example of the licentiousness of the Caroline verse-writers, and several of his shorter poems are characterised by the same grossness and indelicacy. But at the Court of the Stuarts such features were too often recommendations, and Carew's lyrics were the delight of the cavalier gallants of the time, who copied their least admirable qualities in amorous verses, as numerous as they were, fortunately, ephemeral.

Closely linked with Carew are two other court verse-writers—Lovelace and Suckling.

Richard Lovelace  
(1618-1658).

Among cavalier poets, Lovelace would occupy a very unimportant position if he had not been the author of two lyrics which have deservedly



secured a permanent place in English poetry. *To Lucasta on going to the Wars*, and *To Althea from Prison*, are not, it is true, his only verses of any value, but they are so much better than the rest of his poetry, that, in comparison, it may almost be neglected. His life was that of a typical cavalier. He belonged to an old Kentish family, and at Oxford was distinguished for his personal beauty and attractive character. His earliest literary attempts were dramatic. While at Oxford he wrote a comedy, *The Scholar*, which was successfully acted there in 1636; and some years later he wrote a tragedy, *The Soldier*, which was never produced, owing to the parliamentary edict against play-acting. Both plays are now lost. After leaving Oxford in 1639, Lovelace served in the royal army against the Scots, and in the following year returned to his estate in Kent. In 1642 he was chosen to present to Parliament the famous 'Kentish petition,' and was committed to prison by order of the House. After seven weeks imprisonment, during which he wrote *To Althea from Prison*, he was released, and joined the king at Oxford. On the defeat of the royal cause he took refuge abroad for a time, but returned in 1648, and was again imprisoned by order of Parliament. While in prison he published *Lucasta: Epodes, Odes, Sonnets, Songs, etc.*, to which was added *Aramantha, A Pastoral*. Released in 1649, he spent nine years in battling with poverty, due to the confiscation of his estates, and died in 1658. A volume entitled *Posthume Poems of Richard Lovelace* was published in the following year by his brother, but contains no poems of any literary value. According to tradition, his death was due to despair, caused by the unfaithfulness of the lady addressed as Lucasta, who married under the impression that he was dead.

Much of Lovelace's verse is almost hopelessly obscure, but it is hard to say whether this obscurity is due to over-

elaboration, or to want of care. The earlier editions abound in printer's errors, which it is now impossible to correct.

His two masterpieces, already referred to, are familiar to all readers of poetry. Of his other poems, the ode on *The Grasshopper*, addressed to Mr. Charles Cotton, is perhaps the best, and is not unworthy to take a place beside Cowley's exquisite effusion on the same theme. A few verses from this ode may serve to illustrate his style :

' Oh ! thou that swingst upon the waving ear  
Of some well-filled oaten beard,  
Drunk every night with a delicious tear  
Drop't thee from heaven, where thou wert reared.

' The joys of earth and air are thine entire,  
That with thy feet and wings dost hop and fly,  
And, when thy poppy works, thou dost retire  
To thy carved acorn bed to lie.

' Up with the day, the Sun thou welcomest then,  
Sport'st in the gilt plaits of his beams,  
And all these merry days mak'st merry men,  
Thyself, and melancholy streams.

' But ah ! the sickle ! Golden ears are cropped :  
Ceres and Bacchus bid good-night ;  
Sharp frosty fingers all your flowers have topped,  
And what scythes spared, winds shave off quite.'

The ode closes with the wish, expressed in four more verses, that Cotton and Lovelace may make a perpetual summer in each other's friendship.

Sir John Suckling is a conspicuous figure among the wits of the Court of Charles I. At an early age he inherited a considerable fortune from his father, who had been Comptroller of the Royal Household under James I., and spent some years in foreign travel, and in service in the German war.

Returning to England he attached himself to the Court, where his ready wit, handsome presence, and careless generosity made him a general favourite.

‘He was incomparably ready at reparteeing, and his wit most sparkling when most set upon and provoked. He was the greatest gallant of his time, the greatest gamester both for bowling and cards, so that no shopkeeper would trust him for sixpence.’

When the Scotch war broke out, Suckling raised a troop of horse for the king. In the following year he became the prime mover in the plot to bring the northern army to London to overawe the Long Parliament; but on the discovery of the plot he fled, and died a few months afterwards in exile and misery. His poems were collected and published five years after his death. They are, like their author, full of careless grace and light-hearted gallantry; but slovenly, and only too often unquotable. When he produces a sprightly and melodious song, like the well-known *Why so pale and wan, fond lover?* in *Aglaura*, he seems to do so by the purest chance, and lapses recklessly into mere doggerel and obscenity. His *Ballad on a Wedding* is in many anthologies, and several of his songs are familiar. There is nothing in his poems of the chivalrous devotion that dignifies Lovelace’s two great songs; impudent frankness and careless *bonhomie* are their special characteristics. He might, perhaps, have produced better poetry if he had abandoned his favourite doctrine that a gentleman ought not to take trouble over verse-writing. Here is a characteristic trifle of his:

‘Out upon it, I have loved  
Three whole days together;  
And am like to love three more,  
If it prove fair weather.

'Time shall moult away his wings,  
Ere he shall discover  
In the whole wide world again  
Such a constant lover.

'But the spite on't is, no praise  
Is due at all to me ;  
Love with me had made no stays  
Had it any been but she.

'Had it any been but she,  
And that very face,  
There had been at least ere now  
A dozen dozen in her place.'

Our own age has awarded the foremost place among  
Robert Herrick  
(1591-1674). Caroline lyrical poets to Robert Herrick,  
whose verses, after having been unaccount-  
ably neglected throughout the eighteenth  
century, are now represented in all selections of English  
poetry.

Herrick, like Milton, was a Londoner by birth. Left an orphan by the death of his father, a Cheapside goldsmith, in 1592, he was apprenticed to his uncle in 1607, and spent the next six years in London. While there he was admitted into the Apollo Club, and became an enthusiastic admirer of Ben Jonson. His poems, some of which were no doubt written during this period of his life, show clear signs of Jonson's influence.

In 1613 he left London, and entered as a fellow-commoner at St. John's College, Cambridge. From thence he migrated to Trinity Hall, and having taken his M.A. degree, and written many piteous appeals for money to buy books to his rich but somewhat niggardly uncle, he returned, in 1620, to London. Here we lose sight of him for some years ; but in 1629, having taken holy orders, he was presented by Charles I. to the living of Dean Prior in Devonshire,

where he lived till deprived by the Commonwealth government in 1647. From his poems we can gather many particulars of his life and doings. We know of Prudence Baldwin, his housekeeper; of the pets which, like Cowper at a later time, he loved to gather around him—a cock, a lamb, a spaniel, and above all, a pet pig; we know of the wakes and wassailings that relieved the monotony of country life; of the days of depression when he longed to be back among the wits of the “Apollo.”

On his expulsion from his benefice he came to London, and there published his collected poems in a volume entitled *Hesperides, or the Works both Human and Divine of Robert Herrick*. The sacred poems were separated from the rest under the sub-title, *His Noble Numbers, or His Pious Pieces*. Except for this division, the poems (nearly thirteen hundred in number) are entirely without orderly arrangement. The most delicately beautiful are those songs that come redolent of the fresh country air and the scent of the flowers of Devonshire gardens:

‘I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds, and bowers,  
Of April, May, of June and July flowers;  
I sing of maypoles, hack-carts, wassails, wakes,  
Of bridegrooms, brides, and of their bridal cakes.’

*Corinna going a-Maying*, perhaps the best known of all Herrick’s country poems, is one of the most perfect studies of idealized village life in the language. The following, perhaps less familiar, is scarcely less full of the same peculiar charm:

‘TO MEADOWS.

‘Ye have been fresh and green,  
Ye have been filled with flowers:  
And ye the walks have been  
Where maids have spent their hours.

'You have beheld how they  
With wicker ark did come,  
To kiss and bear away  
The richer cowslips home.

'You've heard them sweetly sing,  
And seen them in a round ;  
Each virgin, like a spring,  
With honeysuckles crowned.

'But now we see none here  
Whose silvery feet did tread,  
And with dishevelled hair  
Adorned this smoother mead.

'Like unthrifths, having spent  
Your stock, and needy grown,  
You're left here to lament  
Your poor estate alone.

Flowers and maidens, songs and sweet scents, and summer days—these are the things of which he loves to sing—with sometimes an under-current of sorrow because flowers fade, and summer days cannot last for ever.

Herrick's love songs, of which the volume contains a considerable number, have a sensuous beauty which is rarely passionate, and only occasionally indelicate. Herrick loves women as he loves flowers, because they are fragrant with perfume and beautifully attired. The twist of a riband, or the rustle of a 'tempestuous petticoat' fills him with delight. His best known poem of this class, *To Anthea* ('Bid me to live'), has a note of genuine emotion deeper than most of these amorous songs. 'Julia,' to whom many of them are addressed, may perhaps have been a mistress of Herrick's younger days, for there is a touch of reality about the verses to her that is absent from those to Perilla, Silvia, and the rest. A few lines, gathered almost at random, may illustrate the delicate

little fancies that give their charm to these amorous verses :

‘I dare not ask a kiss,  
I dare not beg a smile,  
Lest having that or this  
I might grow proud the while.

‘No, no ; the utmost share  
Of my desire shall be  
Only to kiss the air  
That lately kissèd thee !’

Besides these, the *Hesperides* includes some delightful stanzas on fairies, which Mr. Gosse attributes to the influence of Ben Jonson’s masques. Herrick was ‘the last laureate of Fairyland,’ the fairyland of *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, on whose borders even the grave Milton strayed in earlier years. Of the epigrams there is not one that all lovers of Herrick do not wish he had not written, or had destroyed unpublished. They have all Martial’s unsavouriness, and none of his ingenuity.

The sacred verses are not marked by any profundity of spiritual thought, but are sincere and reverent expressions of religious feeling. The *Litany*, *Thanksgiving*, and the *Dirge of Jephthah’s Daughter*, are the best known, and the best worth knowing. The prayer appended to the volume sufficiently disarms criticism of the loose verses that here and there disfigure the *Hesperides* :

‘For these my unbaptized rhymes,  
Writ in my wild unhallowed times,  
For every sentence, clause, and word,  
That’s not inlaid with thee, O Lord !  
Forgive me, God, and blot each line  
Out of my book that is not thine ;  
But if of all thou findest one  
Worthy thy benediction,  
That one of all the rest shall be  
The glory of my work and me.’



At the Restoration he returned to Devonshire, and died there in 1674.

Herrick has been described as the foremost English lyrical poet before the time of Shelley, and this description is less inaccurate than such sweeping assertions usually are. In command of musical language and graceful expression he is unsurpassed, but his verses fall short of the ideal of lyric poetry chiefly through a want of spontaneousness. They are carefully constructed, ingenious and melodious, but they do not burst in a flood of passion, or quiver with a thrill of ecstasy. And yet there is the true lyric touch in such lines as these :

‘ Fall on me like a silent dew,  
Or like these maiden showers  
Which, by the peep of day, do strew  
A baptism o’er the flowers ;  
Melt, melt my pains  
With thy soft strains,  
That, having ease me given,  
With full delight  
I leave this light,  
And take my flight  
For heaven.’

The epicurean Herrick, by nature a poet, and only by accident a parson, stands in strong contrast to the saintly and ascetic Herbert, the sweet savour of whose holy life is still fragrant in the pages of Walton’s biography. George Herbert was born in 1593 at Montgomery Castle, the seat of his father, Sir Richard Herbert, who died soon after his birth. Of his six brothers, the eldest, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, won for himself an European reputation, the history of which belongs to the Shakespearian age, and died in 1648.

George Herbert entered at Trinity College, Cambridge,

in 1608 from Westminster School, and was elected a minor fellow of the college in 1609. Of his early Latin verses the most interesting is a volume of satires in reply to Andrew Melville's *Anti-Tami-Cami-Categoria*, an attack upon the universities of Oxford and Cambridge for their hostility to the Puritans. Herbert's verses, which were circulated in manuscript, and only published after the Restoration, show how strongly, even in early life, he was repelled by the Puritan movement.

In 1616 Herbert became a major fellow of his college, and five years later was elected public orator of the university. In this latter capacity he was brought into occasional contact with King James, whose favour shown to the university it was his duty formally to acknowledge in courtly Latin diction. Both Herbert's immediate predecessors in the office had received preferment from the king, and through the influence of the Earl of Pembroke, to whose family he belonged, Herbert was further recommended to the royal notice, and was led to cherish high hopes of some promotion. In one of his poems, entitled *Affliction*, he records some of the thoughts and aspirations of this period of his life. The concluding verses shall be quoted here:

‘Whereas my birth and spirit rather took  
The way that makes the town,  
Thou did'st betray me to a lingering book,  
And wrap me in a gown.  
I was entangled in a world of strife  
Before I had the power to change my life.

Yet, for I threatened oft the siege to raise,  
Not simpering all mine age,  
Thou often did'st with academic praise  
Melt and dissolve my rage.  
I took thy sweeten'd pill, till I came near;  
I could not go away, nor persevere.

'Yet lest, perchance, I should too happy be  
In my unhappiness,  
Turning my purge to food, thou throwest me  
Into more sicknesses.  
Thus doth thy power cross-bias me, not making  
Thine own gift food, yet me from my ways taking.

'Now I am here, what thou wilt do with me  
None of my books will show.  
I read, and sigh, and wish I were a tree,  
For sure I then should grow  
To fruit or shade : at least some bird would trust  
Her household to me, and I should be just.

'Yet though thou troublest me, I must be meek,  
In weakness must be stout ;  
Well, I will change the service, and go seek  
Some other master out.  
Ah, my dear God ! though I be clean forgot,  
Let me not love Thee, if I love Thee not.'

The hopes referred to in these verses were partly realized by the gift of the sinecure rectory of Whitford, to which the king presented Herbert, though still a layman, in 1623. Soon after this his health, precarious from childhood, broke down. He left the university, and resolved, as the issue of a period of retirement and self-examination—of conflict, as he pictured it to himself afterwards, with the allurements of the world—to take Holy Orders. His appointment by Bishop Williams to the incumbency of Leighton Bromswold, in Huntingdonshire, brought him under the influence of Nicholas Ferrar of Little Gidding, whose friendship strengthened Herbert's Arminian views. In 1627 he resigned the position of public orator, and three years later was presented by Charles I. to the vicarage of Bemerton, near Salisbury, where, after two years of devoted labour as a parish priest, he died in 1632.

From his deathbed he sent to Ferrar 'a little book' containing, in his own words, 'a picture of the many spiritual conflicts that have passed between God and my soul before I could subject my own will to the will of Jesus my Master.' Ferrar, who was authorized to publish or destroy the manuscripts as he judged best, at once applied for a licence for publication, and the volume, entitled *The Temple, or Sacred Poems and private Ejaculations by George Herbert*, was issued in 1633. The title is explained by the verse which Ferrar added 'In His Temple doth every man speak of His Honour.'

It is on *The Temple* that Herbert's literary reputation rests. His Latin and Greek poems require here no notice, and his one prose work, *The Priest in the Temple*, will be dealt with in a later chapter. The volume consists of a number of short poems on religious subjects, couched in quaint but terse and sometimes musical language. Herbert's imagery shows much over-elaboration, after the manner of Donne, who had been a close friend of his mother, and of his own youth : but his verses are free from the dulness of most of Vaughan's poems and the extravagance of many of Crashaw's. He is the poet of a meditative and sober piety that is catholic alike in the wideness of its appeal and in its love of symbol and imagery. Sometimes his verse is marked by a gentle but very real grace, as in the well-known lines beginning :

' Sweet day ! so cool, so calm, so bright—  
The bridal of the earth and sky ;  
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night ;  
For thou must die ;'

and his quaintness often gives a certain charm to his conceits, as, for instance, in the following stanza from *The Church Porch* :

'Judge not the preacher ; for he is thy judge ;  
 If thou mislike him, thou conceiv'st him not.  
 God calleth preaching folly. Do not grudge  
 To pick out treasures from an earthen pot.  
 The worst speaks something good ; if all want sense  
 God takes a text and preacheth patience.'

The popularity of Herbert's poems—a popularity that has lasted to our own times—is no doubt due in part to the fact that, like Cowper and Keble, he is the poet of a great Church movement. The Arminian zeal of Laud is tempered in Herbert by the humility and gentle self-consciousness of his character, but he was as truly the poet of the High Church party of the seventeenth century as Cowper was of the Evangelical revival, or Keble of the Tractarian movement. With both these poets it is natural to compare him, especially as both have expressed their indebtedness to him. He is inferior in almost all respects to Cowper at his best, but is comparatively free from that morbidness which gives an unhealthy tone to much of the later poet's work: he is more terse and vigorous than Keble, but is inferior in delicacy of touch and imagery to the Tractarian. Till the publication of *The Christian Year*, he remained the most widely read Anglican devotional poet, and in his own age he became the head of a group of poets, that included at least two writers—Crashaw and Vaughan—whose verses are worthy to rank with his own.

If George Herbert represents the meditative and practical aspect of the Arminian movement, Richard Crashaw is the mouthpiece of its most fervent aspirations and emotions. The son of the Rev. William Crashaw, vicar of Whitechapel, and a sturdy defender of Protestantism, Richard Crashaw, some years after his father's death, entered at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in 1631, and was elected a Fellow of

Peterhouse in 1637. In the first year of his Cambridge life he produced a volume of Latin and English elegies on the death of a college friend, William Herries; and he contributed Latin verses to several Anthologies in the succeeding years. Meanwhile his religious character was undergoing a remarkable development. Soon after he reached Cambridge he came under the influence of Nicholas Ferrar, whose 'Protestant Nunnery' at Little Gidding was within a ride from Cambridge, and under the spell of Ferrar's ascetic piety his early training in Protestant theology gave place to a mystical and fervent devotion which, after his expulsion from Peterhouse by the Puritan Commission in 1649, drove him to the Roman Catholic Church for protection and rest. Found by Cowley some years later in the direst poverty in Paris, he was introduced by him to the notice of the Queen, and through her influence obtained a position of trust under Cardinal Pallotta, then acting as Governor of Rome. After two years spent in his service, Crashaw was presented by him to a benefice in the famous Church of Our Lady at Loretto; but died a few weeks later at the early age of thirty-seven. Cowley, who had befriended him in life, laid one of his loveliest elegies as a tribute on his grave.

Crashaw's poems were published in 1646, soon after his arrival in Paris, in a volume entitled, *Steps to the Temple, Sacred Poems, with other Delights of the Muses*. The title, selected by the anonymous editor of the volume, apparently in reference to Herbert's *Temple*, refers only to the sacred poems—'steps for happy souls to climb heaven by'—the secular poems being included under the sub-title, *Delights of the Muses*. Much of the volume consists of juvenile verses and occasional trifles of no special merit. Among the secular poems the best known are the pretty, though rather tedious, 'Wishes' to a *Supposed Mistress*, beginning:

‘Who e’er she be,  
That not impossible she,  
That shall command my heart and me,’

and *The Muses’ Duel*, a rendering of Strada’s Latin fable of the Poet and the Nightingale, notable for what Mr. Swinburne calls its ‘dazzling intricacy and affluence of refinement, its choiceness and subtlety.’ But it is only at the touch of religious emotion that Crashaw’s muse takes fire. Then his mystical piety transforms that sensuous passion, which at times degenerates into sensuality in the lyrics of Carew or Herrick, into an intensity of ecstatic devotion, that is unsurpassed among English poets. The closing lines of *The Flaming Heart*, though familiar to most lovers of poetry, shall be quoted in illustration :

‘Live in these conquering leaves : live all the same ;  
And walk through all tongues one triumphant flame ;  
Live here, great heart ; and love, and die, and kill ;  
And bleed, and wound, and yield, and conquer still.  
Let this immortal life, where’er it comes  
Walk in a crowd of loves and martyrdoms,  
Let mystic deaths wait on’t ; and wise souls be  
The love-slain witnesses of this life of thee.  
O sweet incendiary ! show here thy heart,  
Upon this carcass of a hard cold heart ;  
Let all thy scattered shafts of light, that play  
Among the leaves of thy large books of day,  
Combined against this breast at once break in,  
And take away from me myself and sin ;  
This gracious robbery shall thy bounty be,  
And my best fortunes such fair spoils of me,  
O thou undaunted daughter of desires !  
By all the power of lights and fires ;  
By all the eagle in thee, all the dove ;  
By all thy lives and deaths of love ;  
By thy large draughts of intellectual day ;  
And by thy thirsts of love more large than they ;  
By all thy brim-filled bowls of fierce desire



By thy last morning's draught of liquid fire ;  
 By the full kingdom of that final kiss  
 That seized thy parting soul, and sealed thee His ;  
     By all the heaven thou hast in Him,  
     Fair sister of the seraphim !  
     By all of Him we have in thee—  
     Leave nothing of myself in me ;  
     Let me so read thy life, that I  
     Unto all life of mine may die.'

Crashaw never rises anywhere else to quite the same height of lyrical exaltation as in these lines, which follow a passage of trivial and rather uninteresting conceits ; but the *Hymn to St. Theresa* is more uniformly melodious and intense. More characteristic, perhaps, is *The Weeper*, a poem of over one hundred and fifty lines on the tears of Mary Magdalene, delicately beautiful, but full of elaborate and artificial conceits, culminating in those two intolerable lines, wherein the eyes of the Magdalene are described as

'Two walking baths, two weeping motions,  
 Portable and compendious oceans.'

This is perhaps the lowest depth of bathos ever reached by any of the 'metaphysical' poets, but Crashaw is constantly guilty of similar offences against art and taste. His translation, or rather paraphrase, of the first book of Marini's *Sospetto d'Herode*, while it lacks the lyric sweetness of his shorter poems, has a dignity and grandeur which is at times almost Miltonic. Here are two stanzas chosen almost at random :

'Art thou not Lucifer? he to whom the droves  
 Of stars that gild the morn in charge were given?  
 The nimblest of the lightning-winged loves?  
 The fairest, and the first-born smile of Heaven?  
 Look in what pomp the mistress planet moves  
 Rev'rently circled by the lesser seven!  
     Such, and so rich, the flames that from thine eyes  
     Oppress the common people of the skies.

'Ah, wretch ! what boots thee to cast back thy eyes  
 Where dawning hope no beam of comfort shows ?  
 While the reflection of thy forepast joys  
 Renders thee double to thy present woes ;  
 Rather make up to thy new miseries  
 And meet the mischief that upon thee grows.  
 If Hell must mourn, Heaven sure shall sympathize ;  
 What force cannot effect, fraud shall devise.'

Crashaw is remarkable among poets for the extraordinary inequality of his work. It is impossible to open a page of his poems without being rewarded by some charming novelty of metre or language, some sudden turn of expression or melodious cadence of rhythm. But the music flags, and the moment of inspiration passes, and Crashaw sinks to earth, the child of Marini and Gongora, the weaver of trivial conceits and over-elaborated fancies. It is this inequality that has made his poetry less read than it deserves to be. Poets of as widely different schools as Pope, Coleridge, and Shelley—have each acknowledged their indebtedness to him ; and Mr. Swinburne has in our own day restored some of his lyrical measures to English verse.

Henry Vaughan, "the Silurist"—so called from his having been born among the Silures, or people of South Wales—was a native of Newton, in Brecknockshire, who, after spending some years at Jesus College, Oxford, and suffering some hardships for his devotion to the royal cause in the Civil Wars, ultimately settled down as a physician in his native place. He published in 1646 a volume of love verses, of no particular merit, and another volume, *Olor Iscanus*, was published some years later by his brother without his consent. Soon after this a serious illness led to a religious awakening, due largely to the influence of Herbert's poetry ; and in 1650 Vaughan published the

first part of his best known volume, *Silex Scintillans*, the second part following in 1656. His other writings, both in verse and prose, are chiefly of a devotional character, but do not deserve detailed notice. *Silex Scintillans* shows in its conception and arrangement the influence of Herbert's poetry. It consists of a series of short poems on religious subjects, some of which might almost pass as Herbert's. Many of them have, however, a distinctive character of their own. They are, on the whole, more musical than Herbert's, and occasionally the thought is deeper and more original. But Vaughan knew neither himself nor his fellow-men as Herbert knew them, and the shrewd counsels of the author of *The Temple* often become in the poetry of his disciple mere querulous platitudes. In two respects, however, Vaughan shows the clearer insight. He has a keener eye for the teaching of nature, and a deeper sense of the mystery of childhood. In several of his poems on children may be found the germ of that idea which Wordsworth developed in his *Ode to Immortality*, indeed some admirers of Vaughan have claimed for *The Retreat* the actual parentage of the ode. Part of this poem, as one of Vaughan's happiest efforts, is worth quoting :

‘Happy those early days when I  
Shined in my angel infancy !  
Before I understood this place  
Appointed for my second race,  
Or taught my soul to fancy aught  
But a white, celestial thought ;  
While yet I had not walked above  
A mile or two, from my first love,  
And looking back—a little space—  
Could see a glimpse of this bright face ;  
When on some gilded cloud or flower  
My gazing soul would dwell an hour,  
And in those weaker glories spy  
Some shadows of Eternity ;

Before I taught my tongue to wound  
 My conscience with a sinful sound,  
 Or had the black art to dispense  
 A sev'ral sin to every sense,  
 But felt through all this earthly dress  
 Bright shoots of everlastingness.'

A short poem, entitled *The World*, notable chiefly for the beautiful image with which it opens :

'I saw Eternity the other night,  
 Like a great ring of pure and endless light,  
 All calm, as it was bright,'

and the well-known lines beginning :

'They are all gone into the world of light.'

are perhaps the only other verses of the Silurist now widely known. There are stray images scattered among the other poems that show a true poetic touch, and make it a matter of some regret that the dulness of their setting should have discouraged most readers from seeking for them.

While Herbert and his disciples were giving poetical expression to the religious feelings of men of culture, Quarles'

Francis Quarles  
 (1592-1644). *Emblems* were appealing to a larger and less educated public. The great popu-

larity of the author, rather than his poetical ability, has won for him a place among the religious verse-writers of our period. His life was comparatively uneventful. He was born in Essex, and in due course entered at Christ's College, Cambridge. At Cambridge he met Phineas Fletcher, and the friendship between the two men lasted throughout their lives. After leaving Cambridge, Quarles spent some time in studying law in London, and then became the City chronologer, an appointment he continued to hold until his death. He also held for a time the office of cup-bearer to the Queen of Bohemia. Subsequently he

joined Archbishop Ussher in Ireland, and acted for some years as his secretary. Driven back to England by the outbreak of the Irish Rebellion in 1641, he attached himself to the king's cause; and his publication of a tract entitled *The Loyal Convert*—an attempt to vindicate Charles's summons to his Roman Catholic subjects to take up arms on his behalf—led to the confiscation of his estates by Parliament. Overwhelmed by the loss of his property, and by the accusation of apostasy from the Protestant religion, his health broke down, and in 1644 he died.

For twenty-five years Quarles had been a most voluminous writer both in prose and verse, his earliest production being a comedy, *The Virgin Widow*, which was acted in 1620, though not published till after his death. His only other secular writings were five political tracts. His religious works were much more numerous. In addition to his original poems, he paraphrased in verse the Books of Jonah, Esther, Job, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, as well as portions of other books of the Bible, and published seven volumes of prose religious meditations. His paraphrases, though for the most part dull, occasionally exhibit considerable poetic power, and are free from the eccentricity of thought and expression that marks his original verse. Of his numerous works, two only, the *Emblems* and the *Enchiridion*, have attained to lasting popularity. The *Enchiridion*, a series of religious reflections, shows Quarles as a prose writer of considerable ability, but his *Emblems, Divine and Moral*, published in 1635, attained to a permanent popularity far greater than that of any other of his writings. The idea of the work, which consists of a number of short poems on texts of scripture, each with an appropriate illustration, was borrowed from *Pia Desideria*, a volume published on the Continent some years before by Herman Hugo, who him-

self adopted his plan from Andrea Alciati of Milan, whose *Emblems* were published in the sixteenth century. The extent to which Quarles borrowed from Hugo gave rise to Pope's satire in the *Dunciad* :

‘ Or where the pictures for the page atone  
And Quarles is saved by beauties not his own.’

No doubt the volume owed much of its popularity to the illustrations, but the verse is clear and musical, full of quaint conceits such as the age that followed Donne had learned to love, and pious without either sublimity or intensity. It is difficult to conceive of any poet who could produce verse of a high order of merit in close on a hundred and fifty short poems written to order on as many pictures; and the author of the *Emblems* has certainly written nothing that can be classed with the best of Crashaw or Vaughan. But he has here kept a level of poetic excellence in his verse considerably above that to which it sometimes sank. The equality of his poetry makes the task of selection rather difficult, but a few verses from an *Emblem* on Psalm cxix. 5, may be quoted as a fair sample :

‘ Where shall I seek a guide ? Where shall I meet  
Some lucky hand to lead my trembling paces ?  
What trusty lanthorn will direct my feet  
To ’scape the danger of these dangerous places ?  
What hopes have I to pass without a guide  
Where one gets safely through, a thousand fall beside.

‘ An unrequested star did gently slide  
Before the wise men to a greater light ;  
Backsliding Israel found a double guide ;  
A pillar and a cloud ; by day, by night ;  
Yet in my desp’rate dangers, which be far  
More great than theirs, I have no pillar, cloud, nor star

‘ O that the pinions of a clipping dove  
Would cut my passage through the empty air,

Mine eyes being seal'd, how would I mount above  
 The reach of danger and forgotten care !  
 My backward eyes should ne'er commit that fault  
 Whose lasting guilt should build a monument of salt.

'Great God ! thou art the flowing spring of light ;  
 Enrich mine eyes with thy refulgent ray ;  
 Thou art my path ; direct my steps aright ;  
 I have no other light, no other way :  
 I'll trust my God, and Him alone pursue ;  
 His law shall be my path, his heavenly light my clue.'

It is not easy to identify Quarles' religious verses with those of any particular religious party. Though certainly not a Puritan, he exhibits more frequent traces of Puritan influences than perhaps any other poet of his time, excepting Wither; on the other hand, he does not seem to have shared in the Arminian tendencies that helped to mould the religious life of Herbert. His writings may be regarded as one indication of the extent to which many of the characteristic religious tenets of the Puritans were held also by a section of the Church which repudiated their political opinions.

Among the religious poets of the period George Wither deserves mention. The best of his work belongs to the preceding age, which saw the publication of his *Abuses Stript and Whipt* and *The Mistress of Phalarete*. Like Milton, he

'Kept not for long his happy, country tone,'

but became involved in the political contest of the time, and wrote much doggerel and many pamphlets. In the war he served as captain of a troop of horse on the Parliamentary side, and was once saved from death, when captured by the Royalists, by Sir John Denham's timely jest that 'he would not be accounted the worst poet in England so long as Wither lived.' He served under



Cromwell in various offices, and was imprisoned for a while at the Restoration, but was released some time before his death in 1667. All his later verses that are worthy of notice are included in the volume of sacred poems entitled *Hallelujah*, published in 1641. In some of these we catch, amid the predominant Puritan tones, the old note of Spenserian music. Here is a fragment from the volume:

‘As this my carnal robe grows old,  
Soil’d, rent, and worn by length of years,  
Let me on that by faith take hold  
Which man in life immortal wears.  
So sanctify my days behind,  
So let my manners be refined,  
That when my soul and flesh must part  
There lurk no terrors in my heart.’

William Habington is to some extent a connecting link between the Puritanism of Wither and the Roman Catholicism of Crashaw. His father, a Roman Catholic of Worcester, nearly lost his life for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot in the same year that the poet was born. He was educated abroad with a view to taking holy orders, but returned to England instead to woo and wed Lady Lucy Herbert, daughter of Lord Powis, whose praises he sang both as lover and as husband in a volume of verse issued in 1634 under the title *Castara*. The religious verses included in the collection are devout expressions of religious feeling, and those in praise of the virtues of Castara are pleasing and sincere, never sinking below but seldom rising above mediocrity. In the preface of the volume Habington expresses the hope that ‘the innocency of a chaste Muse shall be more acceptable and weigh heavier in the balance of esteem’ than the lewd verses of the love-poets of the time. There is something morbid, and almost unmanly, in

this ostentatious parade of morality. It was the same Spenserian thought that had inspired the *Comus* of Milton; but here it loses something of its delicacy in exchanging the romantic and ideal for the concrete and personal environment.

Here is the poet's Elysium :

' While Time seven ages shall dispense,  
 We'll talk of love ;  
 And when our tongues hold no commerce,  
 Our thoughts shall mutually converse, .  
 And yet the blood no rebel prove.  
  
 ' And, though we be of several kind,  
 Fit for offence,  
 Yet are we so by love refined  
 From impure dross, we are all mind ;  
 Death could not more have conquered sense.'

A few other poets of the Caroline period deserve a passing notice. Corbet (1582-1635), successively Minor Poets. Bishop of Oxford and of Norwich, enjoyed a great reputation in his own day as a humorist and boon companion. His poems, collected and published after his death, also enjoyed a certain vogue. They are occasional trifles, touched at times with humour or imagination, but rarely rising above mediocrity. His *Farewell to the Fairies* is still included in many collections. Here, as in many of his verses, his strong anti-Puritan feeling appears :

' Lament, lament old abbeys,  
 The fairies' lost command ;  
 They did but change priests' babies,  
 But some have changed your land ;  
 And all your children sprung from thence  
 Are now grown Puritans :  
 Who live, as changelings, ever since  
 For love of your domains.'

William Cartwright (1611-1643), a young Oxford don, who died at the early age of thirty-two, was highly esteemed among his contemporaries as a poet and man of learning. Dr. Fell, Bishop of Oxford, said of him, 'Cartwright is the utmost man can come to.' Nothing in the writings that he has left justify the warm admiration that his personality seems to have evoked. He is a facile verse writer, especially of panegyric addresses, and a few of his shorter poems are pleasant enough of their kind—academic exercises in amorous verse such as the minor poets of the age were accustomed to produce.

Sir Edward Sherburne, whose literary work began during the Civil war, and lasted till nearly the end of the reign of Charles II., is chiefly known as a translator of Seneca, Manilius, and other Latin and Greek authors. His original verse is not of any special note. Another translator of repute was George Sandys, son of the Archbishop of York, who beguiled the closing years of a life spent chiefly in travel by making a metrical translation of the Psalms in smooth, clear, and vigorous verse. The volume was published in 1636; and Sandys then set to work on a translation of the *Æneid*, which was left uncompleted at the time of his death. Thomas May, dramatist and historian, published in 1627 a translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, and three years later a Continuation in seven books, carrying on the poem to the death of Cæsar. This Continuation he afterwards translated into Latin verse, which 'was thought to be not inferior, in the purity of the Latin, and the harmony of the verses, to the verses of Lucan himself,' and won for its author a high reputation as a poet and scholar.

## CHAPTER VI.

### TRANSITIONAL POETS.

MOST of the poets mentioned in the last chapter had completed their work by the death of the king. During the Commonwealth a new group of verse-writers came into prominence, forming a connecting link between the age of Herrick and Crashaw, and that of Dryden and Butler. The chief characteristics of this new school are wholly different from those of the writers of the Caroline period. Exuberance and extravagance of poetic fancy gave place to an even-paced and conventional style of verse, pruned and trimmed into the octosyllabic couplet that now became the one recognized metrical form. Poetry, which in the earlier period had been chiefly passionate and emotional, now became descriptive and didactic, and thus while enlarging the sphere of its activity narrowed the scope of its genius. Let Waller's verses to Sacharissa be compared with Herrick's to Julia, and the change will become apparent. The tangled and straggling beauty of a Devonshire thicket has become the well-clipt neatness of a suburban hedgerow. But though much was lost in the change, something was gained; the extravagant conceits and overstrained metaphors of the 'metaphysical' school disappeared from the poetry of the Restoration to be replaced by the massive solidity and regulated ornateness of the classical style. Waller, Denham and Davenant are the

chief poets of the new school during the Commonwealth, while in Cowley and the satirist Cleveland we may trace the new influence gradually becoming predominant over the old. In matter, rather than in style, Joseph Beaumont, Henry More and Chamberlayne belong to the same group.

The inscription on Waller's tomb, describing him as  
*inter poetas sui temporis facile princeps,*
Edmund Waller  
(1605-1687). represents the deliberate verdict of the  
age of the Restoration on his work. Born  
in a position of affluence, the only son of one of the richest  
squires of Buckinghamshire, and connected, through his  
mother, with Hampden and Cromwell, Edmund Waller  
knew in early life nothing of that adversity which is  
traditionally associated with the service of the Muses. He  
was educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge,  
when scarcely seventeen was returned for Amersham as  
member of the third parliament of James I., and continued  
to sit during the first three parliaments of Charles I. In  
1627 he caused some scandal in London society by carrying  
off an heiress of great beauty, whose hand the Court had  
designed to confer on a rival suitor. Left a widower a year  
later, he now paid his addresses, in a series of pretty but  
singularly unemotional love poems, to Lady Dorothy Sidney,  
whom he styles *Sacharissa*; her marriage, some years later,  
to Lord Spenser, does not seem to have caused her  
admirer any very poignant grief.

*The Battle of the Summer Islands*, a narrative poem in  
three cantos describing a fight between the islanders of  
Bermuda and two whales that were stranded in the bay,  
was written about this time, and shows clearly the new  
developement of the heroic couplet, with which Waller was  
to be specially associated. Another poem of about the  
same date, *Upon his Majesty's Repairing of Paul's*, has a

special interest owing to Denham's reference to it in *Cooper's Hill*:

'Secure while thee the best of poets sings,  
Preserved from ruin by the best of Kings.'

As the clouds of political conflict darkened, Waller's close connection with the Court and with the parliamentary leaders led him into an equivocal position, and in 1642 he became involved in a plot which nearly cost him his life. Saved from death by abject and discreditable self-abasement, Waller took refuge in France till 1654, when Cromwell allowed him to return—a favour which the poet repaid with a fulsome though perhaps not wholly insincere panegyric. After the Restoration, Waller's reputation as a wit and poet grew rapidly, culminating at the time of his death in 1687. The more temperate praises of Dryden, Addison, and Pope, served to retain for him a high place among English poets during the eighteenth century, since which time he has shared in the general neglect into which the minor 'classical' poets have fallen. Considering that Waller's earliest verses were written in 1621, and his latest on his death-bed in 1687, the total amount of his verse is surprisingly small. Most of his poems are occasional, and many of them trivial in their immediate subject, but they are polished with the utmost care and good taste. His panegyrics and complimentary verses are graceful and often dignified. While the heroic couplet was, from the very beginning of his poetical career, his favourite metre, he was almost the last of the poets of the time who could write songs worthy to rank with the masterpieces of the Elizabethan age. *Go, Lovely Rose!* is too familiar to need quotation, but the lines *On a Girdle* are less known—

'That which her slender waist confin'd,  
Shall now my joyful temples bind ;

No monarch but would give his crown  
His arms might do what this has done.

‘It was my heaven’s extremest sphere,  
The pale which held that lovely deer;  
My joy, my grief, my hope, my love,  
Did all within this circle move!

‘A narrow compass, and yet there  
Dwelt all that’s good, and all that’s fair:  
Give me but what this riband bound,  
Take all the rest the sun goes round.’

As an illustration of Waller’s use of the couplet, here are the closing lines of his poem on *Divine Love*, dictated, according to tradition, on his death-bed:

‘The seas are quiet, when the winds give o’er!  
So calm are we, when passions are no more!  
For then we know how vain it was to boast  
Of fleeting things, so certain to be lost.  
Clouds of affection<sup>1</sup> from our younger eyes  
Conceal that emptiness which age describes;  
The soul’s dark cottage, batter’d and decay’d,  
Lets in new light thro’ chinks that time has made;  
Stronger by weakness, wiser men become  
As they draw near to their eternal home;  
Leaving the old, both worlds at once they view  
That stand upon the threshold of the new.’

However Waller may have lived, few poets have taken leave of life in lines of more dignified composure.

The anonymous writer of the preface to a volume of Waller’s *Posthumous Poems*, published in 1690, sums up the contemporary verdict on the poet. ‘Our language owes more to him than the French does to Cardinal Richelieu and the whole Academy. The tongue came into his hands like a rough diamond; he polished it first, and to that degree that all artists since him have admired the

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, prejudice.



workmanship without pretending to mend it.' The writer goes on to claim for Waller the credit of three changes in English verse—the introduction of more polysyllables; the 'binding up' of his thoughts so that the sense shall break with the line; and the adoption of forcible words at the end of the line where the accent falls. 'Mr. Waller first showed us our tongue had numbers and beauty in it.' In face of this testimony it is impossible to deny to Waller an important share in the developement of the heroic couplet in English verse. The extent to which Malherbe and other French writers influenced the new English school is a matter of dispute, but the years that Cowley, Denham, and Waller spent in France certainly contributed to perfect, if not to produce, the change from the romantic to the classical style of poetry.

Waller's earliest disciple in his new style of poetry was Sir John Denham. He was born in Dublin, the son of an Irish judge, and studied at Trinity College, Oxford, and at Lincoln's Inn. He seems to have had little taste for law, and was from early life a reckless and inveterate gambler. His earliest published work was a play, *The Sophy*, which was acted in 1642, and shows clear traces of French influences. In the same year Denham published, anonymously, *Cooper's Hill*, a description of the scenery around Egham, Surrey, which was then his home. The poem was republished in 1655, with considerable alterations—the most noteworthy being the addition of the four lines which have alone sufficed to immortalize Denham as a poet.

'O could I flow like thee, and make thy stream  
My great example, as it is my theme!  
Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,  
Strong without rage, without o'er-flowing full.'

On the outbreak of war Denham took up arms for the King, and also produced a number of squibs and satires on the Parliament, and an elegy of considerable dignity on the death of Strafford. He was looked upon by Parliament as a dangerous enemy, living, as he did, in close intercourse with the king; and on the royal retirement to the Isle of Wight he remained, with Cowley, in London, as a kind of royal spy. After some years of roving life in France following on the king's death, he returned to London in 1657, and passed the next few years in poverty. At the Restoration his fidelity to the royal cause was rewarded by his appointment to the office of Surveyor General of Works. His last years were rendered unhappy by domestic scandals, which helped to bring on an attack of insanity shortly before his death. His last poetic effort was an elegy on Cowley, which ranks with *Cooper's Hill* as one of his happiest effusions. He died in 1669.

Dryden said of Denham that he transferred the sweetness of Waller's lyrics to the epic. *Cooper's Hill* is certainly not an 'epic,' but its sweetness is undeniable. It is the first notable example—excepting Ben Jonson's *Penshurst*—of strictly topographical poetry in the language, and formed the model for Pope's *Windsor Forest* and other later poems. Smooth grace and polished antithesis are its leading characteristics. Some of the best lines are in the description of the Thames:

'My eye descending from the hill, surveys  
Where Thames among the wanton valleys strays;  
Thames, the most loved of all the ocean's sons  
By his old Sire, to his embraces runs;  
Hasting to pay his tribute to the Sea,  
Like mortal life to meet eternity;  
Though with those streams he no resemblance hold,  
Whose foam is amber and their gravel gold,  
His genuine and less guilty wealth t'explore,

Search not his bottom but survey his shore ;  
 O'er which he kindly spreads his spacious wing  
 And hatches plenty for the ensuing spring ;  
 Nor then destroys it with too fond a stay,  
 Like mothers which their infants over-lay,  
 Nor with a sudden and impetuous wave,  
 Like profuse Kings, resumes the wealth he gave ;  
 No unexpected inundations spoil  
 The mower's hopes, nor mock the ploughman's toil,  
 But god-like his unwearied bounty flows,  
 First loves to do, then loves the good he does.'

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The lines already quoted, in which Denham refers to Waller as 'the best of poets,' indicate his familiarity, at the time when he wrote *Cooper's Hill*, with Waller's as yet unpublished poetry.

Denham's satires are crude doggerel, and show more bad taste than ability. He commenced a translation of the *Æneid*, which was never completed. His theory of translation was an advance on the slavish literalness of most of his predecessors, but he was unable to carry it out successfully. *Cooper's Hill* remains his only really noteworthy production.

D'Avenant, whose life and dramatic works have already been dealt with, may fairly be grouped with Waller and Denham as one of the leaders of the new school. His earliest volume of poems, published in 1638, was entitled *Madagascar*, after the first and longest poem of the collection. Though heralded by the warm encomiums of the poet's friends, this volume is of little value or interest. Twelve years later, while D'Avenant, captured by Parliament on an expedition to found a royalist colony in Virginia, was lying at Cowes Castle awaiting his trial, his epic poem *Gondibert*, appeared, and at once became the centre of

D'Avenant's  
*Gondibert*.

interest and controversy in the literary circles of the period. It belonged unmistakably to the new school, and was prefaced by commendatory verses by Waller and Cowley, and by a prose 'appreciation' by Hobbes; while it was attacked in satirical verse by the champions of romantic poetry as a typical illustration of the new tendency against which they were contending.

The poem was incomplete, containing only two books and part of a third—about sixty thousand lines in all. Its hero is a Lombard warrior named Gondibert, whose adventures in love and war are complex and hard to disentangle. In spite of much gorgeous and romantic colouring, and much parade of dignified and stately imagery, the poem is not deserving of high praise. Its most noteworthy characteristic is the swell and cadence of its metre—the four-line heroic stanza of Gray's *Elegy*, which David and other verse-writers of the early part of the seventeenth century had introduced, and which D'Avenant used effectively, though not with any extraordinary vigour or originality. Hobbes' confident prediction that the poem would last as long as the *Æneid* or the *Iliad*, is an interesting illustration of how friendship can bias the critical faculty of the philosopher.

In Abraham Cowley we are presented with a striking example of original genius breaking through the restraints of the traditional methods of his time. As a schoolboy at Westminster, his defective verbal memory would have almost incapacitated him from acquiring a knowledge of grammar by the ordinary process of committing rules to heart, had he not been intuitively guided to the method which Roger Ascham had long before recommended. He learnt his grammar, says his biographer, 'by conversing with the books themselves from whence these rules had

been drawn, . . . so that having got the Greek and Roman languages, as he had done his own, not by precept but use, he practised them not as a scholar, but a native.' In 1637 he passed on from Westminster to Trinity College, Cambridge, where his precocity and originality found expression alike in his academic exercises and his poetical effusions. In 1638 he published a pastoral drama entitled *Love's Riddle*, which he is said to have composed four years before. His *Naufragium Jocularis*, a Latin play, the plot of which was probably suggested by Heywood's *English Traveller* (which had appeared in 1633), was, however, the commencement of his fame. Acted at Trinity College, in the same year that Milton composed his *Lycidas*, it for the time as completely eclipsed the latter as the threnody surpasses the comedy in real merit. Dr. Johnson has solemnly condemned the play 'as written without due attention to the ancient models,' but as a literary composition it is scarcely deserving of serious criticism. Its success was doubtless mainly owing, like that of a Westminster prologue in the present day, to an allusiveness the point of which is now lost to us; it overflows, moreover, with 'quips and cranks' and an uproarious merriment which appealed successfully to the junior element in an academic audience—especially when, in the second act, a company of revellers, under the influence of drink, are represented as imagining themselves shipwrecked at sea. The *Guardian*, another play, hastily composed for the entertainment of Prince Charles when he was passing through Cambridge in 1641, would probably have soon ceased to attract attention had it not been that it was republished at a considerable interval and in a greatly improved form, under the title of *The Cutter of Coleman Street*. This was first performed on 16th December, 1661, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, when Pepys was present. The 'Cutter' denotes the slashing night-brawler and brag-

gart, and Cowley tells us that a clamour was at first raised 'that it was a piece intended for abuse and satyre against the King's party.' When, however, this misapprehension had been removed, the piece had a considerable success, and it has frequently been performed since Cowley's time.

Of a very different order of merit were Cowley's early poems, exhibiting, as they do, a felicity of expression, and frequently a maturity of thought, which are really surprising, when the age of the author is taken into consideration. The following stanzas from the short poem entitled *A Vote*, are not unworthy of George Herbert at his best :

'This only grant me, that my means may lie  
Too low for envy, for contempt too high.  
Some honour I would have,  
Not from great deeds but good alone ;  
Th' unknown are better than ill-known ;  
Rumour can ope the grave !  
Acquaintance I would have ; but when't depends  
Not from the number, but the choice, of friends.

'Books should, not business, entertain the light ;  
And sleep, as undisturb'd as death, the night.  
My house a cottage more  
Than palace ; and should fitting be  
For all my use, no luxury.  
My garden painted o'er  
With nature's hand, not Art's, that pleasures yield  
Horace might envy in his Sabine field.'

Cowley was a staunch royalist, and his fortunes followed those of his party. In 1640 he had been elected a minor fellow of Trinity College, but early in the year 1644 he was compelled, like not a few other members of the University, to vacate his fellowship, and was fain to retire to Oxford, where he became for a time an inmate of St. John's College. He now ranked as one of the sufferers for



the royal cause, with which he still further identified himself by the publication, in 1646, of a satire entitled *The Puritan and the Papist*. His residence at the sister university marks an important step in his career. He there became intimate with Lord Falkland, one of the early leaders of that new school of thought which subsequently developed into the famous Latitudinarian movement; while he found his sympathy with the Baconian philosophy stimulated by the scientific spirit which, under the influence of men like Wallis and John Wilkins, was already in progress at Oxford, and afterwards found expression in the formation of the Royal Society. For some time, however, the prospect of a political career, which seemed to open up before him, led him to turn his energies in a direction which he afterwards pathetically lamented as a total misapplication of his native powers. He formed a connexion with the Jermyn family, and eventually followed Henrietta Maria into France. There he became actively engaged as a diplomatist; was sent on various diplomatic errands; and conducted a correspondence in cipher between Charles and his queen. Some of his Letters, written from Paris during the years 1650 to 1653 to Henry Bennet, afterwards Earl of Arlington, have been printed by Grosart in his edition of Cowley's Works. His literary activity during this period appears to have been limited chiefly to amorous effusions of a kind likely to find favour among the young courtiers with whom he came in contact; and in 1647 he printed in London a collection of these under the title of *The Mistressse*, compositions which may be compared with Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and were for some time the most popular collection of the kind in England, while they contain some of their author's happiest efforts. Deficient as he undoubtedly was in strength and singleness of purpose, Cowley vacillated alike in his attachment to party



and in the employment of his talents. For his mistaken adoption of diplomacy, he represents his Muse as chiding him in the following terms :

‘Thou, Changling, thou, bewitch’d with noise and show,  
Wouldst into courts and cities from me go ;  
Wouldst see the world abroad, and have a share  
In all the follies and the tumults there ;  
Thou wouldst, forsooth, be something in a state,  
And business thou wouldst find, and wouldst create !  
Business, the frivolous pretence  
Of humane lusts to shake off innocence.’

*The Complaint.*

In the same tone of self-reproach are conceived the graceful lines which accompanied the presentation of the folio edition of his Works to the Bodleian Library at Oxford in 1656, where the book itself is depicted as soliloquizing in the following fashion :

‘Ah, that my author had been ty’ed like me  
To such a place and such a company !  
Instead of several countries, several men,  
And business, which the Muses hate,  
He might have then improv’d that small estate  
Which Nature sparingly to him did give ;  
He might perhaps have thriven then,  
And settled upon me, his child, somewhat to live.’

Cowley had come over to England in the hope of being able to serve the interests of the royalist party, but in the preface to the volume above referred to there is observable a change of tone which was probably the outcome of a conviction, arrived at by personal observation, that the Puritan ascendancy was likely to be permanent. He states that he has omitted not a few of his earlier compositions, as ‘commendable extravagancies in a boy,’ but of which, he says, ‘I would be loth to be bound now to read them all

over myself'; he throws contempt on the puerilities of classic legend and imagery; and asks why 'the actions of Sampson will not afford as plentiful matter as the labours of Hercules, and why the friendship of David and Jonathan is not more worthy of celebration than that of Theseus and Pirithous?' 'It is time,' he adds, 'to recover poetry out of the Tyrant's hands and to restore it to the Kingdom of God, who is the father of it.' In harmony with these changed views, he now for the first time printed his *Davideis: a Sacred Poem on the Troubles of David*, the opening stanzas of which again record the poet's new theory of his art and its rightful employment:

'Too long the Muses' land hath heathen been;  
 Their Gods too long were Devils, and virtues, sin;  
 But thou, Eternal Word! has called forth me  
 Th' Apostle, to convert that world to Thee;  
 T' unbind the charms that in slight fables lie  
 And teach that Truth is truest poesy.'

Originally designed to extend to twelve books, like the *Æneid* of Virgil (of which it is frequently a close imitation), the *Davideis* reaches only to four. Cowley, in his Preface, pleads that he has had 'neither leisure hitherto, nor appetite at present to finish the work,' and he afterwards represented it as a boyish performance, and that he 'had finished the greatest part of it while he was yet a young student at Cambridge.' We can hardly dissent from Sprat's observation that, if such were really the case, it 'may seem like one of the miracles,' as the poem throughout bears the impress of maturer powers than those of a youth of twenty. It seems in every way probable that the poem was substantially the production of a man approaching forty, and was published with the express design of making his peace with the Puritan party. That it influenced alike the genius of Milton and Sir Walter Scott appears to be beyond

question ; and Rymer ventured to assert that its author here appears as the superior of Tasso. The following passage, the address of Gabriel to David, affords a fair specimen of Cowley at his best in the sacred epic :

“Hail, man beloved ! from highest heaven,” said he,  
 “My mighty Master sends thee health by me.  
 The things thou saw’st are full of truth and light,  
 Shap’d in the glass of the Divine foresight :  
 Ev’n now old Time is harnessing the years  
 To go in order thus. Hence, empty fears !  
 Thy fate’s all white ; from thy blest seed shall spring  
 The promised Shilo, the great mystic King :  
 Round the whole earth his dreaded name shall sound,  
 And reach to worlds that must not yet be found :  
 The Southern clime Him her sole lord shall style,  
 Him all the North, ev’n Albion’s stubborn isle.”

Taking the poem as a whole, its forced ingenuity and incompleteness render it difficult to institute any comparison of its merits with the grandeur and entirety of the *Paradise Lost*. Johnson, irritated at what he looked upon as Cowley’s defection from his principles, stigmatizes it as ‘a narrative spangled with conceits,’ than which, adds the critic, ‘nothing can be more disgusting.’ It probably, however, contributed towards the result which its author had in view,—the disarming the hostility of the party in power. Weary of diplomacy, he now devoted himself to the study of medicine ; composed a Latin poem, *Plantarum Libri duo*, on the properties of simples ; and on December 2nd, 1657, received the degree of M.D. at Oxford, by virtue of a mandate from the Government. In the following year he returned to France, where he remained until the Restoration. With that event, Cowley took fresh heart, and reverting with alacrity to his sentiments of loyalty, composed an *Ode on his Majesty’s Return*, an effusion which added nothing to his poetical reputation. In the following

year he put forth his *Vision concerning his late pretended Highness, Cromwell the Wicked*. This is in prose; and it is deserving of note that, like the  *Davideis*, it professes to be only an instalment of the work originally contemplated. Some stanzas are introduced in which the poet contrasts the experiences of England under the Commonwealth with the felicity which the realm enjoyed under the late monarch. The following lines may serve as a specimen:

‘ When men to men respect and friendship bore,  
 And God with reverence did adore;  
 When upon earth no kingdom could have shewn  
 A happier monarch to us, than our own:  
 And yet his subjects by him were  
 (Which is a truth will hardly be  
 Received by any vulgar ear,  
 A secret known to few) made happier ev’n than he.’

Notwithstanding this adulation, Cowley, like the great majority of the returned royalists, seemed destined for a time to disappointment in his hopes of any substantial reward, and in his *Complaint*, written some time before 1663, he pathetically declared that in the bestowal of the royal favour—

‘ One of old Gideon’s miracles was shown;  
 For every tree and every herb around  
 With pearly dew was crown’d,  
 And upon all the quicken’d ground  
 The fruitful seed of heaven did brooding lie,  
 And nothing but the Muse’s fleece was dry.’

Eventually, however, according to his biographer, ‘by the interest of the Earl of St. Albans and the Duke of Buckingham, he obtained such a lease of the Queen’s lands as afforded him an ample income,’ and the remainder of his life was spent in the enjoyment of a comfortable competence and in retirement at Chertsey.

It is a relief to turn from Cowley's muse, descending to such servile strains, to listen to those happier inspirations wherein he identifies himself with that great scientific movement which, as associated with the newly founded *Royal Society*, was now becoming not only widely influential but even fashionable. Cowley was one of its earliest members; and in 1661 he published *A Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy*, in which, as Milton had already done, in his *Tractate on Education*, he advocated a comprehensive and liberal scheme of study for youth greatly beyond the ideas of the average public of the time. Sprat, in his *History of the Royal Society*, praises the conception as 'in every way practicable; unless perhaps in two things he did more consult the generosity of his own mind than of other men's; the one was the largeness of the revenue with which he would have his college at first indowed; the other that he imposed on his operators a second task of great pains, *the education of youth*.' At the suggestion of his friend, John Evelyn, Cowley composed in 1666 his fine *Ode to the Royal Society*, first printed in the above *History* by Sprat, which appeared in 1667. This is one of his finest compositions, and Dr. Grosart has truly observed that 'no man, unless of the most absolute poetic genius and faculty, could have worked out this noble poem as Cowley has done.' The tribute he here pays to the vast service rendered to science by Bacon is as just as it is admirably expressed:

'From words, which are but pictures of the thought  
(Though we our thoughts from them perversely drew)  
To things, the mind's right object, he it brought:  
Like foolish birds to painted grapes we flew;  
He sought and gather'd for our use the true;  
And, when on heaps the chosen bunches lay,  
He prest them wisely the mechanic way,

Till all their juice did in one vessel join,  
 Ferment into a nourishment divine,  
 The thirsty soul's refreshing wine.

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' From these and all long errors of the way,  
 In which our wandering predecessors went,  
 And, like th' old Hebrews, many years did stray,  
 In deserts but of small extent,  
 Bacon, like Moses, led us forth at last :  
 The barren wilderness he past,  
 Did on the very border stand  
 Of the blest promis'd land ;  
 And, from the mountain's top of his exalted wit,  
 Saw it himself, and shew'd us it.'

Cowley died on July 28th, 1667, in his forty-ninth year. He was honoured with a tomb in Westminster Abbey ; and King Charles declared that ' he had not left behind him a better man in England.' The tribute paid to his genius by Sir John Denham, if pitched in somewhat too high a key, deserves to be quoted as showing the reputation which the poet carried with him to the grave :

' Old mother Wit and Nature gave  
 Shakespeare and Fletcher all they have :  
 In Spenser and in Jonson Art  
 Of slower Nature got the start ;  
 But both in him so equal are,  
 None knows which bears the happiest share.  
 To him no author was unknown,  
 Yet what he wrote was all his own ;  
 He melted not the ancient gold,  
 Nor with Ben Jonson did make bold  
 To plunder all the Roman stores  
 Of poets and of orators.  
 Horace's wit and Virgil's state  
 He did not steal but emulate !  
 And when he would like them appear  
 Their garb, but not their clothes, did wear.'

The period that saw the growth of the classical school produced one satirist of note to bridge the period between *Abuses Stript and Whipt*, and *Hudibras*.  
 John Cleveland (1613-1658).

John Cleveland, Cleavland, or Clieveland, for his name appears in various forms, was for ten years fellow and tutor at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he won for himself a high reputation for learning and wit. 'He was,' says Fuller, 'a general artist, an eminent poet. His epithets were pregnant with metaphors, carrying in them a difficult plainness, difficult at the hearing, plain at the considering thereof. His lofty fancy may seem to stride from the top of one mountain to the top of another, so making to itself a constant level and champion of continued elevation.' Cleveland distinguished himself by vehemently opposing Cromwell's election as member for Cambridge in 1640, and on the outbreak of war fled to the King at Oxford, and became the chief poetical champion of the royalist cause. His earliest and most effective satire, *The Rebel Scot*, was the cavaliers' reply to Pym's treaty with the Scots in 1643. Stray lines are familiar still:

'Had Cain been Scot, God would have changed his doom,  
 Nor forc'd him wander, but confin'd him home.  
 Like Jews they spread, and as infection fly,  
 As if the Devil had ubiquity.'

Or again :

'A Scot, when from the gallows-tree got loose,  
 Drops into Styx and turns a Solan-goose.'

*The Scots' Apostasy* followed in the same vein of coarse satire, and as the political struggle developed, Cleveland's 'satiric rage' fell successively on the assembly and the Parliament, the Puritan divines, and the Protector:



'Æsop's proud ass veil'd in a lion's skin  
 An outward saint lin'd with a devil within . . .  
 He is a counterfeited piece, that shows,  
 Charles his effigies with a copper nose.  
 In fine, he's one we must Protector call,  
 From whom the King of Kings protect us all !'

When Cleveland was imprisoned at Yarmouth in 1655, as a 'person of great ability, and so able to do the greater disservice,' Cromwell, with unusual magnanimity, answered the poet's manly and outspoken petition by giving prompt order for his release. His last years were passed in London, where royalist wits, fallen on evil days, had formed a literary club in faint imitation of the more prosperous assemblies at the 'Apollo.' Here his closest friend was Butler, whose *Hudibras* was in no slight degree modelled on the work of the older satirist. Besides his numerous satires, Cleveland wrote several fulsome panegyrics on Prince Rupert, Laud, and other leaders of the royalist party. More notable than these are his non-political verses. Though disfigured often by extravagant conceits, and not unfrequently by grossness, they are melodious and polished effusions, comparatively free from the careless disregard of metre and rhyme that spoils much of the work of Cartwright, Suckling, and other Caroline poets. Sometimes Cleveland's verse has a very modern ring :

'Mystical grammar of amorous glances,  
 Feeling of pulses, the physic of love ;  
 Rhetorical courtings and musical dances,  
 Numb'ring of kisses arithmetic prove.  
 Eyes like Astronomy,  
 Straight-limb'd geometry,  
 In her heart's ingeny  
 Our wits are sharp and keen,' etc.

This is a favourable specimen of rhythmic consistency, but in such metres Cleveland is venturing on an unexplored

country ; he soon returns to the octosyllabic couplet, and making this an effective instrument for satire, he appears as the precursor of Dryden.

In all but date Alexander Brome belongs to the Caroline School of song writers, though Bacchus rather than Venus is the special theme of his muse. To drink and forget the ills of a disjointed time, when cant and hypocrisy rule supreme, is the burden of his songs. Very little is known of his life, beyond the fact that he was an attorney in the Lord Mayor's Court during the Protectorate. He is to be distinguished from Richard Brome, whose plays he edited, but to whom he does not seem to have been related. He is sometimes, and not wholly undeservedly, called the English Anacreon, and his roystering verses seem to have cheered the hearts of the dispirited cavaliers during the dark days of the Commonwealth. Here is a favourable specimen of his style :

‘Come, come let us drink,  
 ’Tis in vain to think  
 Like fools, on grief and sadness ;  
 Let our money fly,  
 And our sorrows die,  
 All worldly care is madness ;  
 But sack and good cheer  
 Will in spite of our fear  
   Inspire our souls with gladness.

‘Let the greedy clowns  
 That do live like hounds,  
 That know neither bound nor measure,  
 Lament each loss  
 For their wealth is their cross,  
 Whose delight is in their treasure.  
 But we that have none  
 Will use theirs as our own,  
 And spend it at our pleasure.’

To Dr. Beaumont belongs the honour of having written the longest poem in the English language. *Psyche* is an allegorical description, in twenty cantos, of *The Intercourse between Christ and the Soule*. It was first published in 1648, and republished with four new cantos in 1702—three years after the death of the author. The poem is about four times as long as *Paradise Lost*, containing nearly forty thousand lines. The author, a distant relation of Francis Beaumont, the dramatist, was fellow and tutor of Peterhouse, from which college he was expelled at the same time as his colleague and close friend Crashaw. He retired to Hadleigh and there set about the composition of his poem. On the Restoration he regained his former dignities, and became successively Master of Jesus and King's Professor of Divinity.

As a theologian, Dr. Beaumont carried on a friendly controversy with Henry More and the Platonists, but his theological works, in accordance with the provisions of his will, remain in manuscript. *Psyche* is a meagre and ineffective allegory, the moralizings, exhortations, and descriptive passages being linked together only by the most slender outline of narrative. Several cantos are occupied with a poetical history of the life of the Saviour, and the rest trace the course of the soul's progress through temptation and conflict to its final bliss. The poem is marked by much facility of expression, and some power of imagery; but most of all by earnest religious feeling, touched with something of Crashaw's mysticism and much of Herbert's reverence for external symbolism. Alike in style and in subject, it forms a connecting link between the work of these poets and the 'essay in verse' of the eighteenth century. Beaumont has nothing of Milton's power of broad characterization; his good and evil spirits must be, as

in *Dante*, painted with all the wealth of detail—delightful or repulsive—that a fertile imagination can supply. And this heaping together of imagery becomes wearisome in a poem where the philosophic and didactic predominate over the allegorical and descriptive.

Here, as an example of the style of the poem, are three stanzas from the description of Hell in the first canto :

‘ Hell’s court is built deep in a gloomy vale  
High wall’d with strong Damnation, moated round  
With flaming Brimstone ; full against the wall  
Roars a burnt bridge of brass ; the yards abound  
With all envenom’d herbs and trees, more rank  
And fruitless than an Asphaltite’s bank.

‘ The Gate, where Fire and Smoke the porters be,  
Stands alway ope with gaping greedy jaws.  
Hither flock’d all the States of misery ;  
As younger snakes, when their old serpent draws  
Them by a summoning hiss, haste down her throat  
Of patent poison their aw’d selves to shoot.

‘ The hall was roof’d with everlasting Pride,  
Deep paved with Despair, chequer’d with Spite,  
And hanged round with torments far and wide ;  
The front display’d a goodly-dreadful sight,  
Great Satan’s arms stamp’d on an iron shield,  
A crowned dragon, gules, in sable field.’

Here, again, is a stanza on sleep, which, in spite of the weakness of the last line embodies a truly poetical conception :

‘ In this soft calm, when, all alone, the heart  
Walks through the shades of its own quiet breast,  
Heav’n takes delight to meet it, and impart  
Those blessed visions which pose the best  
Of waking eyes, whose day is quenched with night  
Of all spiritual apparitions’ sight.’

There are in this poem,’ said Pope, ‘ a great many

flowers well worth gathering, and the man who has the art of stealing wisely, will find his account on reading it.'

Two other 'mammoth' poems of the period require little more than mention. Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist,

published in 1847 a *Platonic Song of the Soul* in about ten thousand lines. The

poem is in Spenserian stanzas, and affects the archaic language of the *Faerie Queene*. It is divided into four parts: *Psychozoia, or the Life of the Soul*; *Psychathanasia, or the Immortality of the Soul*; *Antipsychopannychia, or a Confutation of the Sleep of the Soul after Death*; and *Antimonopsychia, or a Confutation of the Unity of Souls*. While not devoid of poetical beauty, the composition is notable chiefly in relation to the philosophical opinions of its author, in connection with which it is discussed in a later chapter.

*Pharonnida*, a heroic poem of about thirteen hundred lines, by William Chamberlayne, a physician of Shaftesbury, appeared in 1659; and, the author being unknown and the time unpropitious, soon sank into the obscurity from which Campbell tried to resuscitate it early in this century. The scene of the poem is laid in modern Greece, where the hero Argalia, and his beloved Princess Pharonnida, passing unscathed through intrigue and assault by Turk and traitor, attain at last to well-deserved bliss and prosperity. Though hardly deserving the high praise of Campbell, who styles it 'one of the most interesting stories that ever was told in verse,' the poem is seldom dull, and the metre is free from the monotony of the regular heroic couplet. Here are a few lines describing a sequestered valley where the lovers fled from the pursuit of the king:

'Where every bough  
Maintain'd a feather'd chorister to sing

Soft panegyrics, and the rude winds bring  
 Into a murmuring slumber, whilst the calm  
 Moon on each leaf did hang her liquid balm,  
 With an intent, before the next day's birth,  
 To drop it in those wounds which the cleft earth  
 Receiv'd from last day's beams.'

Mr. Gosse has pointed out the close resemblance, in metrical form, between Chamberlayne's poem and Keats' *Endymion*, and is inclined to regard the debt that Keats owed to the author of *Pharonnida* as larger than has generally been recognized.

Thomas Stanley, the last belated survivor of the metaphysical school, published, in 1649, a volume of translations from Moschus, Ausonius, and other writers, and a volume of original poems two years later. His verse is refined and delicate—especially in the translations—but wanting in vigour and originality. Mr. Gosse calls him 'a tamer and duller Herrick.' His ponderously learned *History of Philosophy*, and his edition of *Æschylus*, both of which belong to the Restoration period, constitute a more substantial claim to literary reputation.

## CHAPTER VII.

SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

THE seventeenth century produced, in Browne and Fuller, two humorists of the very highest order. Thomas Fuller, with his light curly hair and sparkling blue eyes, was the very incarnation of the cheerful and quaint facetiousness that played around the most sacred subjects without irreverence or vulgarity; while the graver and more dignified appearance of Sir Thomas Browne, 'always cheerful, but never merry,' corresponds to the deeper and more subdued humour that informs and enriches his writings.

Among the chief writers of the age of Milton, Browne alone stood entirely aside from the political struggle. Through all the great events which drove Hobbes, Cowley, and Clarendon into exile, Milton into political controversy, and Fuller and Jeremy Taylor into literary retirement, he kept the even tenor of his way, busy with the calls of a large practice, and explorations along the unfrequented by-paths of knowledge.

"He had no sympathy with the great business of men. In that awful year when Charles I. went in person to seize five members of the Commons' House—when the streets resounded with shouts of 'Privilege of Parliament,' and the King's coach was assailed by the prophetic cry, 'To your tents, O Israel,'—in that year, in fact, when the Civil War first broke out, and when most men of literary power



were drawn by the excitement of the crisis into patriotic controversy on either side—appeared the calm and meditative reveries of the *Religio Medici*. The war raged on. It was a struggle between all the elements of government, and England was torn by convulsion and red with blood. But Browne was tranquilly preparing his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, as if errors about basilisks and griffins were the paramount and fatal epidemic of the time; and it was published in due course in that year when the cause which the author advocated, as far as he could advocate anything political, lay at its last gasp. The King dies on the scaffold. The Protectorate succeeds. Men are again fighting on paper the solemn cause already decided in the field. Drawn from visions more sublime—forsaking studies more intricate and vast than those of the poetical sage of Norwich—diverging from a career bounded by the most splendid goal—foremost in the ranks shines the flaming sword of Milton. Sir Thomas Browne is lost in the quincunx of the ancient gardens, and the year 1658 beheld the death of Oliver Cromwell, and the publication of the *Hydriotaphia*.”<sup>1</sup>

This isolation from political controversies almost necessarily implied a similar attitude in relation to ecclesiastical questions. Unaffectedly religious, and even in some respects inclined to superstition, Browne incurred the penalty that falls on moderate men in times of controversy, and was branded as a sceptic by the vehement partisans of all the religious factions.

It is to the scientific movement of the time that Browne more properly belongs. The age of credulity, of alchemy, magic and strange superstitions, lay just behind him; and the age of inquiry and experiment, of iconoclasm and dis-

<sup>1</sup> *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1836.

illusionment, was springing from the seed that Bacon had sown. As yet, scientific research had only added a new mystery to common things, and opened up worlds of possibility, along whose shores fancy was not yet forbidden to play. This new influence pervades Browne's writings—we see it in the philosophic doubt of the *Religio Medici*, too undefined to be sceptical, too young to be intolerant; in the wistful and reluctant concessions of the *Pseudodoxia*; in the fantastic speculations of the *Garden of Cyrus*. But besides being a scientist, Browne was a mystic, an antiquarian and a humorist, and withal a master of rhythmic and ornate language.

His life was uneventful. Born in 1605, the son of a London merchant, he was educated at Winchester and at Pembroke College, Oxford. Attracted by his love of physical science to the medical profession, he spent some years in travel and study at Montpellier, Padua and Leyden, and then settled down to a country practice at Shipley Hall, near Halifax. In 1637, by the advice of several friends, he moved to Norwich, where he spent the rest of his life. Four years after settling at Norwich he married a Norfolk lady, of whose union with him it was said that 'they seemed to come together by a kind of natural magnetism.' A large family grew up around them, whose happiness and education occupied much of their father's thoughts. Norwich was proud of her learned physician, on whom Charles II. conferred the honour of knighthood in 1671, and whose house is described by Evelyn as a 'paradise and cabinet of varieties, and that of the best collections, specially medals, plants, books, and natural things.' He died in 1682, at the age of seventy-seven, more than twenty years after his best literary work was completed.

The *Religio Medici*, written during Browne's residence in Shipley Hall, was not originally intended for publication;

but it was circulated in manuscript among the friends of the author, and in 1642, 'a broken and imperfect copy' was issued without his consent. In self-defence, Browne published in the following year an authorized edition, which appeared with some prefatory observations by Sir Kenelm Digby.

The immediate success of the volume was very great. Its artless and fascinating egotism and brilliant style, and even more its open-minded attitude in relation to religious dogmas, secured for it a welcome throughout Europe. It was translated into Latin, Dutch, French and German; was condemned by the Roman Church to a place in the *Index Expurgatorius*; and eventually passed through more than thirty editions. The treatise is a kind of confession of faith, in two parts; the first dealing with the faith and hopes of the writer, the second with his views on charity. Browne avows himself a member of the English Church, while asserting his right to private judgment in matters indifferent. The outward symbols that repelled Puritans awake in him sympathetic emotion:

'At the sight of a cross or crucifix I can dispense with my hat, but scarce with the thought or memory of my Saviour. I could never hear the Ave-Mary bell without an elevation, or think it a sufficient warrant because they erred in one circumstance, for me to err in all—that is in silence and dumb contempt. Whilst, therefore, they directed their prayers to her, I offered mine to God, and rectified the errors of their prayers by rightly ordering mine own. At a solemn procession I have wept abundantly, while my consorts, blind with opposition and prejudice, have fallen into an excess of scorn and laughter.'

Opinions on theological questions have changed too often for any man to assert his ideas as the truth without doubt.

‘As for those wingy mysteries in divinity, and airy subtleties in religion, which have unhinged the brains of better heads, they have never stretched the *pia mater* of mine. Methinks there be not impossibilities enough in religion for an active faith; the deepest mysteries ours contains have not only been illustrated but maintained, by syllogisms and the rule of reason. I love to lose myself in a mystery; to pursue my reason to an *O altitudo!* ’Tis my solitary recreation to pose my apprehension with those involved enigmas and riddles of the Trinity—incarnation and resurrection. I can answer all the objections of Satan and my rebellious reason with that odd resolution I learned of Tertullian, *Certum est quia impossibile est*. I desire to exercise my faith on the difficultest points, for to credit ordinary and visible objects is not faith, but persuasion. Some believe the better for seeing Christ’s sepulchre; and, when they have seen the Red Sea, doubt not of the miracle. Now contrarily I bless myself, and am thankful that I lived not in the days of miracles, that I never saw Christ or his disciples. I would not have been one of those Israelites that passed the Red Sea, or one of Christ’s patients, on whom he wrought his wonders: then had my faith been thrust upon me; nor should I enjoy that greater blessing promised to all that believe and saw not.’

From the consideration of faith there grows the contemplation of God.

‘In my solitary and retired imaginations I remember I am not alone, and therefore forget not to contemplate Him and his attributes who is ever with me, especially those two mighty ones, his wisdom and eternity.’

From the reverent consideration of these the thought turns to nature as the revelation of God—God as the great First Cause. So the thought strays on, full of quaint paradoxes and unexpected analogies, dwelling on the unseen world, death, hell, and final salvation. The first part closes with a cautious disclaimer of any heretical designs—

“This is the tenour of my belief, wherein, though there be many things singular, and to the humour of my irregular self, yet, if they square not with maturer judgments, I disclaim them, and do no further favour than the learned and best judgments shall authorize them.’

The second part, in praise of charity, is in the same style. Here is a characteristic passage :

‘Whatsoever is harmonically composed delights in harmony, which makes me much distrust the symmetry of those heads, which disclaim against all Church music. For myself, not only from my obedience but my particular genius I do embrace it: for even that vulgar and tavern-music which makes one man happy, another mad, strikes in me a deep fit of devotion, and profound contemplation of the first composer. There is something in it of divinity, more than the ear discovers; it is an hieroglyphical and shadowed lesson of the whole world, and creatures of God, —such a melody to the ear, as the whole world, well-understood, would afford the understanding.’

Through all the treatise there runs a gentle under-current of melancholy. Like Keats, Browne confesses that he has been ‘half in love with easeful death.’ But the charm of it is in the flashes of unexpected humour that break out everywhere—to use Mr. Leslie Stephen’s figure—‘like the grotesque carvings in a Gothic cathedral.’ It is a book to be read slowly, with frequent pauses to allow the quaint thoughts to mature, and with full resolve to be led whither the writer’s fancy suggests. So read, it is a perpetual refreshment and delight. Though full of allusions, it is free from that overloading of quotation and reference which was a prevailing fault of the age, and which makes Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* so hard to enjoy.

The *Pseudodoxia Epidemica, or Enquiries into Vulgar and Common Errors*, published in 1646, shows Browne’s in-

satiable love of what is strange, grotesque and mysterious. The book is, in truth, a museum of curiosities—the sweepings of an antiquarian's note-book. Here you may read of the phoenix, the pelican, and the dolphin, of the flowering thorn and of the shrieking mandrake, of strange errors on Scripture or geography. On the whole, Browne seems more anxious to record than to refute; the benefit of the doubt generally falls on the side of credulity, for in a world so full of mystery how many things may be true that cannot be demonstrated. Hallam, who takes the *Enquiry into Vulgar Errors* much more seriously than Browne probably intended, says that it 'scarcely raises a high notion of Browne himself, as a philosopher, or of the state of physical knowledge in England.' But as an appeal to the credulity of the past it is an excellent defence of the attitude of philosophic doubt, and perhaps that was what Browne intended it to be. The character of the book gives little scope for style, and its literary value is much less than that of the *Religio Medici* or *Hydriotaphia*.

Twelve years after the publication of the *Pseudodoxia* there appeared two treatises of much more literary interest. Browne had already confessed, in the *Religio Medici*, the attraction that Pythagorean numerical speculations had for him; and in the *Garden of Cyrus* he discourses of the Quincunx, or figure of five, in every production of art and nature where he could find it, beginning with the Persian fashion of planting trees, and hunting out real or imaginary quincunxes in the most unexpected places. The novelty of the exploration, far removed from 'vulgar speculations, trite or trivial disquisitions,' attracts the fastidious humorist, and gives the opportunity for the display of much erudition and careful observation, redeemed from the charge of nothingness by a vein of gentle irony that underlies the treatise. The essay closes with a familiar passage,



full of the harmonious music of language, and quaint unexpectedness of ideas, which are Browne's special characteristics.

'But the quincunx of Heaven runs low, and 'tis time to close the first parts of knowledge.—Night, which Pagan theology could make the daughter of Chaos, affords no advantage to the description of order; although no lower than that mass can we derive its genealogy. All things began in order, and so shall they end, and so shall they begin again, according to the ordainer of order and mystical mathematicks of the city of heaven.

'Though Somnus in Homer be sent to rouse up Agamemnon, I find no such effects in these drowsy approaches of sleep. To keep our eyes open longer were but to act our Antipodes. The huntsmen are up in America, and they are already past their first sleep in Persia. But who can be drowsy at that hour which freed us from everlasting sleep? or have slumbering thoughts at that time, when sleep itself must end, and, as some conjecture, all must awake again.'

If there be such a thing as prose poetry, surely we have it in this soliloquy, murmured to the night air and the stars as the epilogue of all these strange wanderings over heaven and earth.

With the *Garden of Cyrus* was published the *Hydriotaphia, or Treatise on Urn Burial*, perhaps the most characteristic of all our author's works. Some cinerary urns have been dug up in Norfolk, and these form the text for a discourse on the funeral customs of all ages and nations. With great wealth of learning and sonorous rhythm of language, Browne discusses these customs and the strange symbols and rites that have gathered around them. Of what nation were these ashes of the dead that have lain here under 'the drums and tramlings of three conquests'? Of what sex and station?



‘Some, finding many fragments of skulls in these urns, suspected a mixture of bones; in none we searched was there cause of such conjecture, though sometimes they declined not that practice. The ashes of Domitian were mingled with those of Julia; of Achilles with those of Patroclus. All urns contained not single ashes; without confused burnings they affectionately compounded their bones, passionately endeavouring to continue their living unions. And when distance of death denied such conjunctions, unsatisfied affections conceived some satisfaction to be neighbours in the grave, to be urn by urn, and touch but in their manes.’

The thought of how strangely the bulk of a man sinks into a few pounds of bones and ashes leads on to many quaint and curious observations. ‘If the burthen of Isaac were sufficient for an holocaust, a man may carry his own pyre.’ ‘He that hath the ashes of his friend hath an everlasting treasure.’ ‘That devouring agent (fire) leaves almost always a morsel for the earth, whereof all things are but a colony.’

The significance of the ceremonies that attend the obsequies of the dead attracts the mystic antiquarian :

‘That in strewing their tombs the Romans affected the rose, the Greeks amaranthus and myrtle; that the funeral pyre consisted of sweet fuel, cypress, fir, larix, yew, and trees perpetually verdant, lay silent expressions of their surviving hopes.’

Then comes a new line of thought. How little we know of the world of spirits!

‘Were the felicities of the next world as closely apprehended as the felicities of this, it were a martyrdom to live.’

How the broader hope breaks through the crust of creed in such a passage as this :

‘But whether the virtuous heathen, who lived better than he spake, or erring in the principles of himself, yet lived above philosophers of more specious maxims, be so deep as he is placed, at least so low as not to rise against Christians, who believing or knowing that truth, have lastingly denied it in their practice and conversation—were a query too sad to insist on.’

The last chapter swells into a magnificent descant on the vanity of human efforts to perpetuate the memory of the dead :

‘The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man.’

‘To subsist in lasting monuments, to live in their productions, to exist in their names and predicament of Chimeras, was large satisfaction unto old expectations, and made one part of their Elysiums. But all this is nothing in the metaphysicks of true belief. To live, indeed, is to be again ourselves, which being not only an hope, but an evidence in noble believers, ’tis all one to lie in St. Innocent’s Churchyard,<sup>1</sup> as in the sands of Egypt. Ready to be anything, in the ecstasy of being ever, and as content with six-foot as the *moles* of Adrianus.’

So ends the treatise—not sadly, but with a note of triumph in the harmonious music of its diction, like some great funeral march through the roll of which the long procession of forgotten dead goes by—each to sleep in his appointed place, and to stand in his lot at the end of the days

The *Hydriotaphia* was the last of Browne’s writings published during his life. After his death several of his tracts and papers were collected and published, the most noteworthy being the treatise on *Christian Morals* and the

<sup>1</sup> St. Innocent’s was a church in Paris where bodies soon consumed.

*Letter to a Friend.* The former of these, which is a kind of sequel to the *Religio Medici*, lacks something of the humour and discursive fancy of the earlier treatise. It is more didactic and artificial in style, and though relieved here and there by touches of quaint fancy, is disappointing as the mature work of the pen that gave us the *Religio Medici*. Shrewd aphorisms of practical wisdom take the place of glowing periods and fantastic speculations. Here are a few, culled at random :

‘Measure not thyself by thy morning shadow, but by the extent of thy grave, and reckon thyself above the earth by the line thou must be contented with under it.’

‘Men have ruled well who could not, perhaps, define a Commonwealth, and they who understood not the globe of the earth command a great part of it.’

‘When nature fills the sails, the vessel goes smoothly on, and when Judgment is the pilot, the insurance need not be high.’

‘Figures of most angles do nearest approach into circles, which have no angles at all. Some may be near unto goodness, who are conceived far from it; and many things happen, not likely to ensue from any promises of antecedencies.’

‘The vices we scoff at in others, laugh at us within ourselves.’

*The Letter to a Friend*, probably, like the *Religio Medici*, not written for publication, deserves to rank with the *Hydriotaphia*, as one of Brown’s masterpieces.

It is a consolatory letter, written to a friend on the death of a young man whom Browne had attended. The physician had been watching the approach of death, and had seen the soul glowing through the gradually wasting fleshly veil; and he writes as one who feels at once the awe and impotence of the King of Terrors. He discusses the origin and treatment of consumption, the mystery of

dreams, and other subjects growing out of the peculiar circumstances of the case, but returns always to the thought of the dying man, whose early farewell to the world is not wholly to be mourned :

‘And surely if we deduct all those days of our life which we might wish un-lived, and which abate the comfort of those we now live; if we reckon up only those days which God had accepted of our lives, a life of good years will hardly be a span long; the son in this sense may outlive the father, and none be climacterically old. He that early arriveth unto the parts and prudence of age, is happily old without the uncomfortable attendance of it, and ’tis superfluous to live into grey hairs, when in a precocious temper we anticipate the virtues of them.’

To analyze the charm of Sir Thomas Browne’s writings is impossible. It is a charm that is rather felt than defined. Tranquillity and repose are the special characteristics of his style. There are no tumbled torrents of words, no vehement outbursts of denunciation or appeal. He stirs thought rather than enthusiasm, and leads us through a world of glimmering twilight, where time is measured by ages and space by infinity, and where the human soul stands forth pre-eminent in dignity against a background of mystery and darkness. He is always self-conscious, and seems to write as he thinks, for himself first, and only secondarily for any larger public. For the ‘illiterate vulgar’ he has a scholarly and half humorous contempt.

A sense of the solemnity of life underlies all his writings. He was brought constantly, by his professional work, face to face with death, and it remains for him a great reality, an unsolved mystery, in comparison with which the problems of life sink into insignificance. But he is never gloomy, and seldom morbid. To desire death, and to fear it, are to him alike cowardly. And so, if he leads us among the tombs,

it is with a pensive smile playing on his lips, and with some stately or whimsical thought ever ready to break into language. 'Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?' exactly represents his attitude towards all that is mysterious in life.

'In the life of sleep and the life of waking there is an equal delusion, and the one doth but seem to be an emblem or picture of the other; we are somewhat more than ourselves in our sleep, and the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the Soul.'

In his sense of the awe of common things, and his delight in communion with the inner soul of nature, Browne touches on the same train of thought that Wordsworth afterwards made peculiarly his own; while his mystical speculations re-appear in Coleridge, though unaccompanied by that saving sense of humour which imparts so peculiar a charm to the earlier writer.

In all Browne's treatises, most of all in the *Hydriotaphia*, there is a balance and reverberation in the sentences, and a 'unique feeling for the musical colour of words' that resembles the blank verse of *Paradise Lost* more closely than any other prose writer. His vocabulary is stored with bizarre and Latinized words; but they do not—except perhaps in the *Christian Morals*, where the habit has become a vice—produce the same sense of incongruity as in the prose of Milton and Jeremy Taylor. Here the stones harmonize with the character of the building—the richly-carved old-world Gothic cathedral that stands apart from, and above, the jar and jangling of the market and the street.

The influence of Brown's style may be traced (though to what extent is disputed) in the writings of Dr. Johnson, whose biography of the sage of Norwich still remains the best

account of his life. But much more directly and unmistakably is the author of the *Religio Medici* the literary progenitor of Charles Lamb, who has recorded his love for 'out of the way humours and opinions,' 'things quaint and irregular, out of the road of common sympathy,' and especially for 'the beautiful obliquities of the *Religio Medici*.' The object of his admiration fails, it is true, to present us with the gentle and homely sweetness of the *Essays of Elia*, but the great works of the older writer are marked by a sublimer imagination, a wider range of learning, and an equally original vein of humour. It is as a humorist, indeed, that Sir Thomas Browne has vindicated for himself an abiding place in English literature; though he is, perhaps, not widely read in an age that has been content to be comic and well-nigh forgotten how to be humorous.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THOMAS FULLER.

THE homely quaintness, indomitable cheerfulness and admirable humour of the writings of Thomas Fuller, have awakened in generations of readers a feeling of almost personal affection for their author; but the high place which they vindicate for him among the writers of the age of Milton has not, perhaps, been adequately recognized. Conspicuous for wide learning, immense industry, and unobtrusive goodness, he is not less notable as a writer for the clearness and vigour of his style, and the perspicuity and delicate grace of his thoughts.

He was born in 1608, and at the early age of thirteen entered at Queens' College, Cambridge, whence he subsequently migrated to Sidney Sussex College. Fuller always cherished the warmest feelings of gratitude towards the University to which he belonged. In his *Holy State*, when delineating The Good Bishop, he writes :

‘He is thankful to that College whence he had his education. He conceiveth himself to hear his mother College always speaking to him in the language of Joseph to Pharaoh’s butler: “But think on me, I pray thee, when it shall be well with thee.”’

In 1830 Fuller was presented by the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College to the perpetual curacy of S. Benet’s Church. One of his first duties as incumbent



was to commit to the grave the body of Hobson, the University carrier, whose death in the winter of 1630 is commemorated in two of Milton's early poems. In the following year, Fuller's uncle, Dr. Davenant, Bishop of Salisbury, bestowed on him the prebendary stall of Netherbury, in the cathedral of Salisbury, and two years later presented him to the rectory of Broad Windsor, a picturesque village in Dorsetshire, where for several years our author strove to carry out his ideal of 'the Good Parson,' which he afterwards sketched in *The Holy State*.

While at Cambridge, Fuller, like most of the University wits of the time, had 'made many a clandestine match with the Muses,' and five years before the publication of Cowley's  *Davideis* , he issued his first literary production, *David's heinous Sin, heartie Repentance, heavie Punishment*. The poem, which was published in a little volume of about forty pages, is of slight literary value, though flashes of poetic fancy sometimes relieve its uncouth and over-elaborated conceits. The following stanza, on the death of Bathsheba's child, is a favourable specimen of the style of the verse :

'As when a tender rose begins to blow  
Yet scarce unswaddled is, some wanton maide,  
Pleased with the smell, allurèd with the show,  
Will not reprieve it till it hath displayed  
The folded leaves ; but to her breast applies  
Th' abortive bud, where coffinèd it lies,  
Losing the blushing dye before it dies,  
So this babe's life, newly begun, did end.'

One memorial of Fuller's ministry at S. Benet's remains in a course of sermons on the Book of Ruth, which he published in 1654, under the title *A Comment on Ruth*. They shew the same qualities that characterized his maturer work—much quaintness of fancy, moderation of

views, and earnest though somewhat eccentric devoutness of spirit.

The care of his Dorsetshire parish did not withdraw Fuller from literary pursuits. In 1639 appeared his *Historie of the Holy Warre*, an entertaining account of the Crusades in four books, followed by a fifth or supplementary book of discussive anecdotes and reflections. None of his works exhibits to greater advantage his admirable way of telling a story, and of introducing the most unlooked-for and incongruous allusions with the happiest effect.

The diligence and discrimination with which he used such original authorities as were then accessible to the historian is also attested in this volume. *The Holy Warre* passed through three editions in rapid succession, but its popularity seems to have waned after the Restoration, as compared with that of our author's other works,

In 1640 Fuller became preacher at the Chapel of the Savoy in London, where he soon gathered a large and influential congregation. As the political contest grew more intense, his outspoken though moderate royalist opinions made him an object of suspicion to the Parliamentary party, which relied greatly on the influence of the city preachers in winning support to their cause. His efforts were directed to the securing of peace by means of a compromise. Some of his most eloquent sermons were preached at this time, and their keynote is this earnest desire for peace :

‘O the miserable condition of our land at this time ! God hath showed the whole world that England hath enough in itself to make itself happy or unhappy as it useth or abuseth it. Her homebred *wares* enough to maintain her, and her homebred *warres* enough to destroy her, though no foreign nation contribute to her overthrow. Well, whilst others *fight* for peace, let us *pray* for peace ;

for peace on good terms, yea, on God's terms, and in God's time, when He shall be pleased to give it, and we fitted to receive it. Let us wish both King and Parliament so well as to wish neither of them better, but both of them best—even a happy accommodation.'

When this seemed no longer possible, Fuller forsook London to join the King at Oxford, leaving behind him his library, the loss of which he deeply regretted. While acting as chaplain to the forces in the field, he was occupied in seeing through the press his *Holy State* (published in 1642), and in gathering materials for his *Worthies of England*.

*The Holy State* belongs to a class of literature peculiarly characteristic of the seventeenth century. Bishop Earle's *Micro-Cosmographie*, and Overbury's *Characters* are, perhaps, the best known examples of this kind of composition, which attained to great popularity through the satisfaction it gave to the 'Puritan passion for analysis of human character.' But though Fuller's book belonged to this class, the easy flow of his diffuse and conversational style contrasts strongly with the concentration and rigidity of most of the character-sketches of the period. The volume is divided into four books, delineating ideal characters in various walks of life, followed by a fifth, *The Profane State*, wherein various evil characters are held up as warnings. A number of short biographies of historical persons are introduced as illustrations of the qualities described. 'This curious collection of essays and characters,' says Mr. James Nichols, 'is the production of a man possessed of no ordinary grasp of mind, who lived in times of uncommon interest and excitement, and who wrote with the obvious intention to personate "a wise and witty moderator" between the two great parties in the State that were then openly at issue.'

Even in the troubled time in which it appeared, *The Holy State* attained to an immediate and lasting popularity. As has often been noticed, the shrewd common sense and pithy conciseness of many of its sentences give them the air of current proverbs. It is from this work that 'elegant extracts' are generally gathered to illustrate the author's quaint and whimsical philosophy.

In 1644 Fuller settled for a while at Exeter, and there published his *Good Thoughts in Bad Times*—'the first fruits of the Exeter press'—*Good Thoughts in Worse Times* following five years later. Both are volumes of personal reflections suited to the disturbed and anxious period in which they were written, and designed to lift the reader out of the distracting atmosphere of contest and controversy into the calm of pious meditation. 'In these writings,' says Mr. Russell, 'we have a living portrait of their author, both as a politician and as a divine.'

After some years of unsettled life, Fuller became curate-in-charge of Waltham Abbey, and while there published one of his most important works, *A Pisgah Sight of Palestine*. This volume, which appeared in 1650, contains a vivid and picturesque account of the Holy Land, embellished with quaintly designed engravings. The veracity and buoyancy of the description makes the book irresistibly attractive, and the erudition it displays is scarcely less noteworthy. The most varied sources of information are laid under contribution, and the indebtedness of the author duly acknowledged. So, in a description of the city of Tyre, he writes :

'We intend a little to insist both upon the commodities and countries of such as hither resorted. For though I dare not go out of the bounds of Canaan to give these nations a visit at their own homes, yet finding them here within my precincts, it were incivility in me not to take

some acquaintance of them. In setting down their several places I have wholly followed (*let my candle go out in a stink when I refuse to confess from whom I have lighted it*) Bochartus in his *Holy Geography*.'

Mr. Christophers, in his *Homes of Old English Writers*, admirably sums up the merits of this volume :

'His book really answers to its title. He might be thought to have seen the "Good Land," so graphic are some of its sketches, so lively his observations, and so pleasantly does he keep the eyes and hearts of his hearers. He is as painstaking, acute, discriminating, and cautious as Dr. Robinson himself; but where this tedious Doctor is dull, dry, and monotonous, our old Fuller is all life and buoyancy, enticing you by his company into long rambles over scenes which he knows all about, and upon which he looks lovingly, about which he talks charmingly, and which he really photographs upon your very soul by the light of his genial wit and hallowed fancy. His wit, however, is never out of tune with pure and simple faith; his intellectual brightness never loses its devout warmth, nor does any affectation of science ever mar the loveliness of his meek and reverent spirit.'

After contributing a preface and seven lives to a collection of biographies of eminent divines of the period, published in 1651 under the title *Abel Redivivus*, Fuller moved to London, where he became lecturer at St. Clement's Church in the City. He was occupied for the next three years in seeing through the press his *Church History of Britain*, which was published in 1655. For many years he had been conscious of the need of a fair, adequate and appreciative history of the English Church, and had been gradually gathering materials. The disturbed condition of national affairs had, however, obliged him, in his own words, 'rather to study to live than to live to study,' but

as soon as he had completed the *Pisgah Sight*, he set to work steadily at the preparation of the long-promised volume. Not without some misgivings that it was 'high time to knock off,' he carried the narrative down to the death of Charles I., thus providing a vivid and careful contemporary picture of the most important events of his own time. To this work were appended subsidiary histories of the University of Cambridge, and of Waltham Abbey, both giving evidence of no small amount of careful research.

The moderate and judicial tone of the *Church History* did not save its author from becoming involved in controversy with Dr. Peter Heylyn, who entered the lists as the champion of the Arminian party. This singular person, who united to a love of acrimonious controversy inflexible integrity of purpose and other admirable qualities, had attained a measure of literary fame through his *Cosmography*, published in 1621. Having received preferment in the Church through Laud's patronage, he remained an inflexible adherent of the principles of the Archbishop long after they had been abandoned by most of his party. At the instigation of Prynne, whose *Histriomastix* he had analysed for Charles I., he was deprived by the Long Parliament, and for some time carried on his literary work with the greatest difficulty, subsisting on the charity of friends, and in constant fear of molestation by Parliament.

Of his numerous writings, the most notable is the *Ecclesia Restaurata*, a history of the Reformation from the accession of Edward VI. to 1566, in which the writer's strong animus against Presbyterianism is less apparent than in the *Aërius Redivivus*, or *History of the Presbyterians*, which he had published some years earlier. In the *Appeal of Injured Innocence*, Fuller humorously describes his antagonist:



(1) I knew him a man of able parts and learning ; God sanctify both to his Glory and the Church's good ! (2) Of an eager spirit, with him of whom it was said, *Quicquid voluit, valde voluit*. (3) Of a tart and smart style, endeavouring to down with all which stood betwixt him and his opinion. (4) Not over dutiful in his language to the Fathers of the Church (what then may children expect of him ?), if contrary in judgment to him. Lastly, and chiefly : One, the edge of whose keenness is not taken off by the death of his adversary ; witness his writing against the Archbishops of York and Armagh [who both died in 1656]. The fable tells me that the tanner was the worst of all masters to his cattle, as who would not only load them soundly whilst living, but tan their hides when dead ; and none could blame one if unwilling to exasperate such a pen, which, if surviving, would prosecute his adversary into his grave. The premises made me, though not servilely fearful (which, praise God, I am not of any writer) yet generally cautious not to give him any personal provocation, knowing that though both our pens were long, the world was wide enough for them without crossing each other.'

In 1659 Heylyn retorted with a criticism, entitled *Examen Historicum, or a Discovery and Examination of the Mistaken Falsities and Defects in some Modern Histories*. The book consisted of two parts, the first devoted to 'necessary animadversions' on Fuller's *Church History*, the second containing criticisms on the historical work of William Sanderson.

In his *Appeal of Injured Innocence*, published a few months after the appearance of Heylyn's volume, Fuller urged his defence with his customary ingenuity and good humour, it is true, but with singular discursiveness. His book has, indeed, been described as embracing 'almost every topic within the range of human disquisition, from the most sublime mysteries of the Christian religion and



the great antiquity of the Hebrew and Welsh languages, down to the "tale of a tub," and criticisms on Shakespeare's perversion of Sir John Falstaff.' The letter, 'To my Loving Friend, Doctor Peter Heylyn,' with which it closes, deserves citation as a model of Christian courtesy and kindly generosity:

'I hope, Sir, that we are not mutually unfriended by this difference which hath happened betwixt us. And now, as duellers, when they are both out of breath, may stand still and parley, before they have a second pass, let us in cold blood exchange a word, and, meantime, let us depose, at least suspend, our animosities.

'Death has crept into both our clay cottages through the windows, your eyes being bad, mine not good: God mend them both and sanctify unto us these monitors of mortality; and however it fareth with our corporeal sight, send our souls that *collyrium* and heavenly "eye-salve" mentioned in Scripture! But, indeed, Sir, I conceive our time, pains, and parts may be better expended to God's glory, and the Church's good, than in these needless contentions. Why should PETER fall out with THOMAS, both being disciples of the same Lord and Master? I assure you, Sir (whatever you conceive to the contrary) I am cordial to the cause of the English Church, and my hoary hairs will go down to the grave in sorrow for her sufferings.

\* \* \* \* \*

'You know full well, Sir, how, in heraldry two lioncels rampant endorsed are said to be the emblem of two valiant men, keeping appointment and meeting in the field, but either forbidden fight by their prince, or departing on terms of equality agreed betwixt themselves. Whereupon, turning back to back, neither conquerors nor conquered, they depart the field several ways (their stout stomachs not suffering them both to go the same way), lest it be accounted an injury one to precede the other.

'In like manner I know you disdain to allow me your equal in this controversy betwixt us; and I will not allow

you my superior. To prevent future trouble, let it be a drawn battle; and let both of us "abound in our own sense," severally persuaded in the truth of what we have written. Thus, parting and going out *back to back* here (to cut off all contest about precedency), I hope we shall meet in heaven *face to face* hereafter. In order whereunto, God willing, I will give you a meeting, when, and where you shall be pleased to appoint; that we, who have tilted pens, may shake hands together.

'St. Paul, writing to Philemon concerning Onesimus, saith: "For, perhaps, he therefore departed for a season that thou mightest receive him for ever." To avoid exceptions, you shall be the good Philemon, I the fugitive Onesimus. Who knoweth but that God, in His providence, permitted, yea, ordered this difference to happen betwixt us, not only to occasion a reconciliation, but to consolidate a mutual friendship betwixt us during our lives, and that the survivor (in God's pleasure only to appoint) may make favourable and respectful mention of him who goeth first to his grave? The desire of him who remains, Sir,

'A lover of your parts, and an honourer of your person,  
'THO. FULLER.'

The naïve humour and controversial fairness of Fuller's *Appeal* seem really to have allayed Heylyn's irritation; for in the appendix of a book entitled *Certamen Epistolæ, or The Letter Combate*, published in the same year, he admitted the 'ingenuity and judgment' of his opponent's vindication, and expressed his willingness to 'agree with his adversary, when he had made reparation to *Injured Innocence*, as professed in the *Appeal*.' This reply was the prelude to a meeting at Abingdon, which resulted in a complete reconciliation and the establishment of a close friendship between the two men.

To Fuller, as to most of the Anglican clergy, the year that followed the death of the Protector was one of suspense and anxiety. In April, 1660, when the Restoration

was assured, he published *Mixt Contemplations in Better Times*, a volume of meditations enforcing the duty of moderation and mutual forbearance at a time when party feeling threatened to run high. On the Restoration of the King, Fuller's long dormant poetic muse broke silence in a loyal panegyric, to which he refers in his *Worthies* with a self-satisfaction which the effusion scarcely justifies. He was reinstated in his lectureship at the Savoy, together with his prebend at Salisbury; and would probably have been promoted to the bishopric of Exeter or Worcester if he had lived a few months longer. Samuel Pepys, who was one of Fuller's friends during the closing years of his life, has several references to him in his *Diary*; under date, January 22nd, 1660-61, he writes:

‘I met with Dr. Thomas Fuller. He tells me of his last and great book that is coming out: that is, the *History of all the Families in England*; and could tell me more of my own than I knew myself. And also to what perfection he hath now brought the art of memory; that he did lately to four eminently great scholars dictate together in Latin, upon different subjects of their proposing, faster than they were able to write, till they were tired; and that the best way of beginning a sentence, if a man should be out and forget his last sentence (which he never was), that then his last refuge is to begin with an *Utcunque*.’

The ‘last and great book’ here referred to, *The Worthies of England*, was the product of years of careful and laborious investigation. Though repeatedly laid aside through pressure of other duties, it was always ‘on the stocks’ and had just received a final revision before going to press, when Fuller died, in August, 1661, in the fifty-fourth year of his age. The design of the book is to record the natural resources and most eminent worthies of each county in order, but the author's exuberant fancy strays beyond his appointed task

into innumerable unlooked-for digressions which greatly increase the attractiveness of the work. The bulk of the volumes consists of short biographical sketches of the chief men of note in each county. By far the most valuable of these lives are those that relate to the worthies of Fuller's own time. 'His notices of them generally contain some personal anecdote or other details, that open up a view of character not touched upon before.'

It is as a biographer that our author specially excels. He is never bitter or vindictive towards political or religious opponents; but he is happiest in sketching men whose goodness he can unreservedly commend. As an illustration, may be cited his account of 'Mr. John Dod' in his *Church History*:

'The same year with this Archbishop [Laud] died another divine no less esteemed amongst men of his own persuasion; namely, Mr. John Dod, who in the midst of troublesome times, quietly withdrew himself to Heaven. . . . He was a passive Nonconformist, not loving anyone the worse for difference in judgment about ceremonies, but all the better for their unity of affections in grace and goodness. He used to retrench some hot spirits when inveighing against bishops, telling them how God under that government had given a marvellous increase to the Gospel; and that Godly men might comfortably comport therewith, under which learning and religion had so manifest an improvement.

'Being at Holdenby, and invited by an honourable person to see that stately house built by Sir Christopher Halton, the masterpiece of English architecture in that age, he desired to be excused, and to sit still looking on a flower which he had in his hand. "In this flower," said he, "I can see more of God than in all the beautiful buildings in the world." And at this day, as his flower is long since withered, that magnificent pile, that fair flower of art, is altogether blasted and destroyed.

'It is reported that he was but coarsely used of the

cavaliers; who, they say, plundered him of his linen and household stuff, though, as some tell me, if so disposed, he might have redeemed all for a very small matter. However, the good man still remembered his old maxim: "Sanctified afflictions are good promotions," and I have been credibly informed that, when the soldiers brought down his sheets out of the chamber into the room where Mr. Dod sat by the fire-side; he, in their absence to search for more, took one pair and clapped them under his cushion whereon he sat, much pleasing himself after their departure that he had, as he said, plundered the plunderers, and by a lawful felony saved so much of his own to himself.

'He was an excellent scholar, and was as causelessly accused as another John of his name (Mr. John Fox, I mean), for lacking of Latin. He was also an exquisite Hebrician, and, with his society and directions, in one vocation, taught that tongue unto Mr. John Gregory, that rare linguist, and Chaplain of Christ's Church, who survived him but one year; and now they both together praise God in that language which glorified saints and angels use in Heaven.

'He was buried at Fauseley in Northamptonshire, with whom the Old Puritan may seem to expire, and in his grave to be interred; humble, meek, patient, hospitable, charitable in his censure of—so in his alms to—others. Would I could say but half so much of the next generation.'

As a theological writer, Fuller is distinguished by earnest piety and indomitable cheerfulness rather than by sublimity of thought or intensity of emotion. Though his moderate attitude on the burning questions of the day did not entirely satisfy either of the great religious parties, it enabled him to continue his ministry through all the vicissitudes of the Commonwealth without any of those vacillations of principle by which other men purchased the toleration of the ruling powers. His temperament unfitted him for entering into the war of invective and vituperation that was raging around him. He rarely displays either enthu-

siasm or indignation, preferring to interest and amuse rather than to rouse or convince. The homely imagery, of which his sermons and devotional writings are full, laid him open to the charge of levity; but though his similes are often grotesque, they are seldom actually ludicrous, while their very incongruity sometimes gives an added force to the comparison.

His attitude in relation to the Church controversies of the time is in strong contrast with Milton's. Fearful of any breach of continuity in the life of the Church, he looked with undisguised dismay at the 'new-making' of the national religion. In his *Holy State* he refers to 'the author of the book lately printed of *Causes Hindering Reformation*;' and in July, 1641, he preached a notable sermon from the text, 'Until the time of Reformation' (Hebrews, xi. 10), which was probably intended as a reply to Milton's pamphlet. 'A thorough Reformation,' he asserts, 'we, and all good men, do desire with as strong affections, though not, perhaps, with so loud noise as any whatsoever.'

After drawing a character-sketch of the true Reformer, he alludes to the party of whose demands Milton had made himself the exponent.

'Yet is there a generation of Anabaptists, in number fewer, I hope, than are reported, yet more I fear than are discovered; people too turbulent to obey and too tyrannical to command. If it should come into their hands to reform, Lord, what work would they make! Very facile, but very foul, is that mistake in the Vulgar translation, Luke xv. 8. Instead of *Everrit domum* (she swept the house) 'tis rendered *Evertet domum* (she overturned the house). Such sweeping we must expect from such spirits, which, under pretence to cleanse our Church, would destroy it. The best is, they are so far from sitting at the *helm* that I hope they shall ever be kept under *hatches*.'



With Milton's scornful allusion to the Fathers, already quoted, it is interesting to compare Fuller's references to them in his character-sketch of the 'True Church Antiquary:'

'He desires to imitate the ancient fathers as well in their piety as in their postures—not only conforming his hands and knees, but chiefly his heart, to their pattern. O the holiness of their living and painfulness of their preaching! How full they were of mortified thoughts and heavenly meditations! Let us not make the ceremonial part of their lives only canonical and the moral part thereof altogether apocryphal, imitating their devotion not in the fineness of the stuff, but only in the fashion of the making.'

These citations suffice to show how completely Fuller's theological standpoint differed from that of Milton, while his controversy with Heylyn served to indicate not less clearly his independent attitude in relation to the Arminian party in the Church. But no gentler knight ever broke lance in the lists of controversy. Perhaps the most remarkable testimony to his innate kindliness is the fact that in all his voluminous writings, there is not one needlessly bitter or unkind word, not one deliberate attempt to wound or slander an antagonist.

Fuller's reputation as a historian rests almost entirely on his *Church History*, and the subsidiary histories appended to it. Though he was seriously hampered by want of access to original authorities he has included a considerable number of documents of historical value. But the charm of the book lies in its homely and almost conversational style. In Charles Lamb's words: 'The reader is taken into a kind of partnership with the writer, his judgment is exercised in settling the preponderance; he feels as if he were consulted as to the issue.' With admirable impartiality, Fuller tries to see the good in all



parties. He is fair alike to Laud and Williams, and while loyal to the memory of the King, is careful to avoid giving offence to the Commonwealth Government. As he says in the *Appeal*—"I did not attemper my *History* to the palate of the government, so as to sweeten it with any falsehood; but I made it palatable thus far forth as not to give a wilful disgust to those in present power, and procure danger to myself by using any over salt, tart, or bitter expression, better forborne than inserted, without any prejudice to the truth.'

In the preparation of the book, Fuller availed himself of the assistance of Selden, Ussher, and other authorities on Church antiquities, and its publication was no doubt assisted by some at least of the numerous patrons, to whom the various sections of the book were dedicated in a series of introductory epistles which provoked the ridicule of Fuller's opponent. It was not without reason that Heylyn made mock of our author's 'good husbandry in raising a nursery of patrons.'

In 1655 Fuller published his *History of the University of Cambridge*, which he designed apparently as the twelfth and completing book of his *Church History*. It exhibits alike his defects and his peculiar merits. He was not an accurate writer, and he is here guilty of not a few serious slips and blunders. On the other hand, it was the first history of the University in English, and nothing can be more felicitous than the manner in which he lifts the treatment of his subject from that of the mere annalist to that of the historian, writing from intimate personal knowledge of more recent events and enlivening his account of the remoter past with a keen perception of both the grave and the lighter questions involved in academic life and with choice anecdotes told as he alone could tell them. The following passage is a specimen of the manner in which

even the architectural history of Cambridge could, in his hands, afford scope for humour :

‘ Within the compass of this last year (1603), but in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, died that worthy and painful servant of Jesus Christ, Mr. William Perkins, whose life I have formerly written and therefore forbear any repetition. He was buried in his own parish church of St. Andrews in Cambridge. Only I will add, it saddened me lately to see that church wherein this saint was interred ready to fall to the ground. Jacob said of Bethel, the house of God, “ How dreadful is this place ! ” I am sorry it may in a far different sense be said of this St. Andrews, filling such as approach to it with fear of the ruins thereof. I say no more, but as David was glad to go up into the house of the Lord, all good men may be sorrowful to behold God’s ruinous house coming down to them.’

It is humour, indeed, that is the warp and woof of Fuller’s writings. Scarcely a page is to be found without some quaint comparison, startling analogy, or audacious pun ; while alliterations abound :

‘ But bold beggars are the bane of the best bounty.’  
 ‘ Prone rather to pity and pardon, than punish his passion.’  
 ‘ His languishing life lasted a year longer.’ ‘ Much be-  
 moaned, a martial man of merit.’

His colloquial style seldom betrayed him into coarseness or vulgarity, nor are his conceits ever too elaborate to be perspicuous. His chief fault is an occasional parade of learning, but he is much less pedantic than Burton or Browne. He excels all other writers of the period in gentle and humorous kindness, which sometimes becomes delicately beautiful. His style is more modern than that of most of his contemporaries ; the sentences are short and their arrangement is admirably clear ; where he digresses—as he often does to follow out some whimsical train

of thought, or tell some humorous anecdote—the digression, and the resumption of the main thread of the narrative are both distinctly marked.

Fuller, it is said, was almost the first man of letters who adopted the writing of books as a means of livelihood. In the introduction to the *Worthies* he quaintly sums up the aims he had in view in the exercise of his prolific pen.

‘Cato, that great and grave philosopher, did commonly demand, when any new project was propounded to him, *Cui bono?* What good would ensue in case the same was effected? Know then, I propound five ends to myself in this book: first, to gain some glory to God; secondly, to preserve the memories of the dead; thirdly, to present examples to the living; fourthly, to entertain the reader with delight; and lastly (which I am not ashamed publicly to profess), to procure some honest profit to myself.’

Under the last head he observes that it was ‘a proper question which plain-dealing Jacob pertinently propounded to Laban, his father-in-law; “and how shall I provide for my house also?” Hitherto no stationer hath lost by me; hereafter it will be high time for me (all things considered) to save for myself.’

Fuller was probably the most popular prose writer of his time, but in the last century his works sank into comparative neglect, until Coleridge, Lamb, and other critics called attention to their literary excellence, and vindicated for their author the high place which he now by general consent occupies among English humorists. Coleridge’s well-known encomium may be cited in conclusion: ‘Next to Shakespeare, I am not certain whether Thomas Fuller, beyond all other writers, does not excite in me the sense and emotion of the marvellous;—the degree in which any given faculty, or combination of faculties, is possessed and manifested, so far surpassing what one would have

thought possible in a single mind, as to give one's admiration the flavour and quality of wonder! Wit was the stuff and substance of Fuller's intellect. It was the element, the earthen base, the material which he worked in: and this very circumstance has defrauded him of his due praise for the practical wisdom of the thoughts, for the beauty and variety of the truths, into which he shaped the stuff. Fuller was incomparably the most sensible, the least prejudiced, great man of an age that boasted a galaxy of great men. He is a voluminous writer; and yet, in all his numerous volumes on so many different subjects, it is scarcely too much to say, that you will hardly find a page in which some one sentence out of every three does not deserve to be quoted for itself as motto or as maxim.'

## CHAPTER IX.

### THEOLOGICAL WRITERS.

THE accession of Charles of I. marks an important turning point in the history of the English Church. In the comparative quiet of the immediately preceding period, Hooker and Andrews had been forging new weapons, with which the Anglican Church might meet the attacks from Rome and Geneva, to which her basis of compromise naturally exposed her. Hitherto her attitude had been defensive, and to some extent conciliatory, but under Laud, whom the death of Andrews, in 1626, brought to the front as the leader of the anti-Calvinist party, she became more aggressive and imperious. The new system aimed at coercion rather than conversion—or perhaps at coercion as the best means of conversion—and from the schools theological controversy passed to the courts; thence, when arbitrary power could no longer suppress free discussion, it passed to the street, and became articulate in pamphlets innumerable. The intense interest taken in theological questions is perhaps the most notable feature of English life in the latter years of the reign of Charles I. Something has already been said, in connection with Milton's prose works, of the pamphlet literature of the period, which absorbed the energies of learned divines like Ussher and Hall, poets like Wither, scholars like Milton and Prynne, and politicians and men of culture like Lord Falkland.

William Prynne may be taken as a typical pamphlet writer of the time. Coming to London from Oriel College, Oxford, he was called to the Bar in due course, but practised little. In 1627 he began his career as a pamphleteer by the publication of a tract on the *Perpetuity of a Regenerate Man's Estate*, followed soon after by treatises against the pledging of healths and the wearing of lovelocks. In 1633, as the fruit of seven years' labour, and four years' proof-correcting, appeared his *Histriomastix*, where fifty-five synods, seventy-one fathers, one hundred and fifty Protestant and Roman Catholic writers, forty heathen philosophers, and many other witnesses, are summoned to give evidence of the wickedness of play-acting. A book containing more than 100,000 references would seem to deserve Hallam's description of it as 'more tiresome than seditious;' but for a supposed reference to the Queen the luckless author was pilloried, fined, mutilated, imprisoned, and expelled from Oxford and Lincoln's Inn. From his prison the undaunted Prynne, undeterred by a second experience of the pillory, carried on his pamphlet war against the ecclesiastical system of Laud, till the Long Parliament set him and his fellow-sufferers free. Then came a time of prosperity. Prynne became member of Parliament for Newport, manager of Laud's impeachment, Recorder of Bath. But his restless pamphleteering spirit broke loose again in 1649 in *A Brief Memento* against the claim of the House of Commons to inclusive political power, which landed the writer a second time in custody. Next year a pamphlet attack on Cromwell led to a third arrest, and the next ten years of Prynne's life were spent in opposing the Commonwealth and Protectorate governments. At the Restoration he was made Keeper of the Records—'to keep him quiet'—and after one last pamphlet against the Corporation Act, which

nearly led to his arrest by order of Parliament for seditious libel, he turned to the compilation of his valuable *Records*, of which he had completed three volumes—the last dedicated to Lord Clarendon—before his death in 1669. In their strong convictions, ponderous learning, and stupendous dulness, Prynne's two hundred pamphlets, representing thirty-five years of unintermitted labour, are unique in the literature of the period.

Turning from this outbreak of ephemeral production to works of permanent literary value, two writers are especially conspicuous, though representing different schools of Anglican religious thought. Jeremy Taylor, nurtured in the ecclesiastical principles of Laud, was the most eloquent champion of the Church in those days of adversity in which she had to plead for the toleration she had denied to others while Chillingworth, striking out a bolder and clearer line, became the precursor of the school of Tillotson and Burnet, though free from the Erastianism which tainted their theology. Whichcote, and the other Cambridge Platonists, are dealt with in another chapter; and there remain a number of theological writers distinguished either for learning, like Ussher and Sanderson, or for their political opinions, like Gauden and Montagu.

Jeremy Taylor is the most famous of the many young scholars who owed their advance to Laud's discriminating patronage. The son of a Cambridge barber, he became a sizar at Caius College in 1626—the year after Milton entered at Christ's—and some years later was elected a Fellow of his College. A sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral brought him under the notice of Laud, who procured for him a Fellowship at All Souls' College, Oxford, and made him one of his chaplains. In 1637 Bishop Juxon presented him to the rectory of Uppingham, where he re-



mained five years, till dispossessed by the Parliament in consequence of his first published work, *Episcopacy Asserted*, written by the King's command. After some troubled years of wandering life as a royal chaplain, Taylor settled in Wales, under the patronage of Lord Carbery, and supported himself for a time by keeping a school. These quieter years were prolific of literary work. His *Liberty of Prophesying* was published in 1647, the *Life of Christ* in 1650, and *Holy Living, Holy Dying*, and several volumes of *Sermons* belong to the succeeding years. In 1658 he removed to Ireland, where he succeeded at the Restoration to the Bishopric of Down and Connor, and subsequently to that of Dromore. Domestic anxieties, troubles with insubordinate clergy, and a feeling of isolation among a strange people clouded the last years of his life, which closed in 1667.

Coleridge speaks of Jeremy Taylor as 'the most eloquent of divines, I had almost said of men,' and adds, that Demosthenes and Cicero would not have grudged him the foremost place. Certainly no preacher has ever enriched our language with nobler bursts of musical and majestic imagery. Browne's prose style may be compared to a deep quiet river; Milton's to a torrent tumbling wave on wave in tempestuous confusion; and Taylor's to a fountain flinging aloft great columns of water, which descend again in avalanches of golden spray. We do not go to him for exact theological statements, like Pearson's, clear reasoning, like Chillingworth's, or quaint humour like Fuller's. His largest work, *Ductor Dubitantium*, an elaborate manual on the *Theory of Casuistry*, published in 1660, is about the least successful of his works. Hallam calls it, 'the most extensive and learned work on Casuistry that has appeared in the English language,' and more recently it has been described as 'illustrating, better almost than any other

book in the language, a remarkable point in the history of speculation—the transition from moral theology to moral philosophy, from the text-books of the confessional to the works of writers on morals, regarded as a matter of ordinary speculation.’<sup>1</sup> But the style of the book is prolix and hazy, overloaded with quotations and references, and only rarely enriched by illustration or eloquence, for which, indeed, the subject gives little scope.

Once at least Taylor’s rhetorical style betrayed him into a compromising position. In a discourse on Repentance, entitled *Unum Necessarium*, published in 1655, his revolt against Calvinist teaching led him to use language which involved him in a charge of Pelagianism, which he laboured earnestly, but not wholly successfully, to disprove. But in his sermons and devotional writings, when he leaves disputes like these, and gives wings to his imagination, there are deep thoughts in the wind and the waters, lessons of God in birds and flowers, in the soft shadows of the clouds, and the blustering fury of the tempests:

‘For so have I known the boisterous north wind pass through the yielding air which opened its bosom, and appeased its violence by entertaining it with easy compliance in all the regions of its reception, but when the same breath of heaven hath been checked with the stiffness of a tower, or the united strength of a wood, it grew mighty and dwelt there, and made the highest branches stoop and make a smooth path for it on the top of all its glories. So is sickness, and so is the grace of God.’

It must be confessed that in passages such as this the very elaboration of the picture deprives it of value as an illustration by withdrawing the reader’s thoughts from the application, but where the metaphor is less elaborated it is sometimes full of rich suggestion. Where Taylor

<sup>1</sup> Stephen, *Horæ Sabbaticæ*.

draws his illustrations from books instead of from nature, the wide range of his learning makes many allusions hard to follow for anyone not well versed in classical literature. Some affectations of style are strongly marked in his writings. One of these, justly condemned by South, in his monotonous repetition of 'So I have seen,' to introduce illustrations; another is his habit of piling up sentence on sentence by the use of the one conjunction 'and.' Illustrations of both these can be found in almost every sermon or chapter of his works. His language is Latinized, after the manner of Brown and Milton, though possibly rather less than either. Like Milton, his sentences are long and involved, and sometimes incoherent; but his style is more natural and flowing. To the level of Milton's scurrilous invective he never sinks; for he had, as Milton had not, the saving grace of charity. A warm-hearted, kindly man, not incapable of strong indignation; but loving peace, and the quiet of green woods, and the smiles of little children; above all, seeking to live as he wrote—a life holy before God, and blameless before men—such was Jeremy Taylor.

His *Discourse on the Liberty of Prophecy* deserves to rank with Milton's *Areopagitica*, as a plea for freedom of opinion. Grounded on the previous work of Hales and Chillingworth, it found a powerful additional argument for toleration in the confusion of the time that was seeking in vain for some absolute truth. Taylor suggests the Apostles' Creed, a summary of fundamental truths, as a broad basis of union. All else may be left to the individual reason and the guidance of expediency—*Salus Populi suprema Lex*—'those doctrines that inconvenience the public are no parts of true religion.' Pressed to their logical issue, Taylor's principles set up sincerity as the 'one thing needful,' but to carry a new truth to its logical issue is the work of generations; to foresee the line of its

development is the most that any one man can hope to attain.

The immediate purpose of the treatise was to hold out a hand to the Independent party in their struggle with Presbyterian intolerance, but Taylor's strong hold of High Church doctrine gave it a great significance, as marking the adhesion of one of Laud's ablest followers to the cause of toleration, whose champions had hitherto been regarded with some suspicion in Arminian circles. The so-called modification of his views of toleration after the Restoration amount, in reality, to little more than a greater appreciation of the difficulties of carrying the principles he had urged into practice.

*Holy Living* is a manual of Christian ethics, treating of the duties of life under the headings of 'Christian Sobriety,' 'Christian Justice,' and 'Christian Religion.' It is full of poetical thoughts and suggestions, but its style is, except in a few passages, less richly ornate than that of the *Sermons* or the companion volume, *Holy Dying*, in which the writer dilates on the shortness, uncertainty, and insufficiency of human life, as an incentive to 'look somewhere else for an abiding city.' A passage from this treatise will serve to illustrate the style and imagery of our 'English Chrysostom.'

'Reckon but from the sprightfulness of youth, and the fair cheeks and full eyes of childhood, from the vigorousness and strong texture of the joints of five-and-twenty, to the hollowness and dead paleness, to the loathsomeness and horror of a three days' burial, and we shall perceive the distance to be very great and very strange. But so have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as morning, and full with the dew of heaven as a lamb's fleece; but when a rude breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on dark-

ness, and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age, it bowed its head and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it fell into the portion of weeds and outworn faces. . . . So does the fairest beauty change, and it will be as bad with you and me; and then what servants shall we have to wait upon us in the grave? What friends shall visit us? What officious people to cleanse away the moist and unwholesome cloud reflected upon our faces from the sides of the weeping vaults, which are the longest weepers for our funeral?’

*Holy Dying* and *Hydriotaphia* have veins of thought in common, but Jeremy Taylor dwells among charnel houses for other purposes than Browne. Though not always haunted by such morbid fancies as these, his thoughts are generally subdued with a note of sadness. As a poet he feels the beauty of life, as a preacher he remembers its vanity. But his melancholy is not tranquil and self-centred like that of the *Religio Medici*; it is a stimulus to action. Life, to him, is a tragedy, the solution of which lies beyond the grave; and men must be won from apathy or indifference that they may prepare themselves for the call that comes from beyond ‘the verge of our sad life.’ ‘The troubled notion of the shadowy beyond is national, and this is why the national renaissance at this time became Christian.’<sup>1</sup>

The Latitudinarians. While the Laudian movement was in the full flood of its prosperous activity, seeking for a state-enforced uniformity as the price of its support to despotic monarchy, Lord Falkland was gathering under his hospitable roof at Great Tew a little group of men of wider and more liberal views—the earliest advocates of toleration.

<sup>1</sup> Taine, *History of English Literature*.

The name of Falkland recalls to us a central figure, chiefly known to the ordinary student of this period as the parliamentary leader and the hero of the battlefield, but whose real influence was far more potent on contemporary thought, whether literary or theological. Lord Falkland (1610-1643). Lucius Carey, afterwards Lord Falkland, had originally been entered as a student at St. John's College, Cambridge, but the appointment of his father in 1622 as Lord Deputy for Ireland led to the son's transfer to Trinity College, Dublin. Of his progress there we have no record, and can estimate it only by its results. On returning to England he resolved to adopt the military profession, and in the hope of finding active employment crossed over to Holland. Disappointed, however, in his expectation, he again returned to England, and, having become the possessor of a handsome fortune inherited from his grandfather, settled down to a studious life at Great Tew in Oxfordshire. His father's death, which took place in 1633, although it compelled his return for a brief period to the capital, seems to have confirmed him in his design of retirement from public affairs. But his solitude was enlivened by frequent visits on the part of friends both from London and from Oxford. 'During their stay with him,' says Clarendon, 'he looked upon no book, his whole conversation was one continued *convivium philosophicum* or *convivium theologicum*.' Among his Oxford friends were Sheldon (afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury), Morley (afterwards Bishop of Winchester), Henry Hammond, the eminent Anglican divine, Doctor Earle, John Hales of Eton, and Chillingworth; while from London came Carew, Davenant, Vaughan, Sandys, Suckling, and others of that brilliant circle immortalized by Suckling himself in his *Session of the Poets*. In the later years of his retirement, however, that is to say from 1635 to 1640, Falkland, judging



from Suckling's lines, devoted himself more especially to theology; although, in his friends' opinion, he was equally fitted to shine in poetry and in graver studies:

'He was of late so gone with divinity  
That he had almost forgot his poetry,  
Though to say the truth, and Apollo did know it,  
He might have been both his priest and his poet.'

As Falkland's intellectual character developed and ripened, impatience of dogmatism became one of its leading features, fostered as that sentiment was by his wide reading in the Greek and Latin patristic literature, and in Church history. In his great speech in the House of Commons (February 8th, 1641), we find him, for the first time, giving it public and pronounced expression. His most intimate friend was Chillingworth, whom, indeed, he is said (although considerable doubt attaches to the statement) to have assisted in the composition of his great work the *Religion of Protestants*. 'They were wont,' says Aubrey, 'to say that if the Great Turk were to be converted by natural reason, these two were the persons to convert him.'

Falkland's literary and political career, terminated by his voluntary martyrdom at the battle of Newbury, belongs to the history of his country. Many a better general could have been better spared; and the prevalent feeling was aptly expressed by Cowley when, on the eve of his friend's departure from Scotland, he pronounced him 'too good for war,' and one who

—'ought to be  
As far from danger as from fear he's free.'

In his hatred of spiritual tyranny and devotion to the cause of intellectual freedom, Falkland strongly resembled Milton, but the stern austerity and combative spirit of the latter



were foreign to his nature. His poetry, although comparatively free from the forced conceits and excessive mannerism of his time, rarely rises above the level of felicitous expression and graceful fancy; and his *Eclogue on the Death of Ben Jonson* (perhaps his happiest effort), seems feeble beside the well-known tribute by Cleveland. He survives mainly by virtue of his influence as a thinker as it exerted itself through those leading minds with whom he had held intercourse—an influence which is clearly to be traced in the works of the two chief literary champions of the school.

William Chillingworth—‘immortal Chillingworth,’ as it was once the fashion to call him—was the connecting link between the Falkland set and the more rigid and uncompromising Arminian leaders. The godson of Laud, son of an Oxford citizen of good position, Chillingworth became a fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, in 1628. In the following year he was won over to the Roman Catholic Church by the arguments of Laud’s old antagonist Fisher, and retired to Douay, where he remained until further reflection, and a correspondence with Laud, led to his return to the Anglican communion. ‘An earnest, and indeed passionate desire for truth was the great characteristic of Chillingworth’s mind. He became a Roman Catholic because he thought that in that Church he should find, not peace, but truth: and he left it because he found himself cheated with mere pretences to truth, which crumbled away from him when he tried to grasp them.’

His refusal to sign the thirty-nine Articles prevented him from accepting clerical office for some years, but he was ultimately persuaded to give a general assent to the Church formularies, and was preferred to the Chancellorship of the Church of Sarum. The sermons of his later years

indicate a growing tendency to conform to the principles and methods of Laud's ecclesiastical system, and an unpublished pamphlet on the *Unlawfulness of Resisting the Lawful Prince*, written in 1642, shows that he was fully at one with the political doctrines of the party. At the siege of Gloucester, Chillingworth was present with the king, and showed his versatility by devising besieging machinery. He was captured by the Parliamentary forces in 1643, and died at Chichester early in the next year. Francis Cheynell, a Puritan divine who had attended him on his deathbed, published an account of his last hours under the title *Chillingworthi Novissima*. The book is of interest only as an evidence that the bitterness of theological controversy respects neither the deathbed nor the grave.

*The Religion of Protestants, a Safe Way to Salvation*, is Chillingworth's one work of importance. A Jesuit writer named Knott had published, in 1630, a book entitled *Charity Mistaken*, the purpose of which was to assert that it was no true charity to hold out hopes of salvation to unrepenting Protestants. To this book Doctor Potter, Provost of Queen's College, Oxford, published a reply, which evoked from Knott a second volume, *Mercy and Truth*, published in 1633. Chillingworth undertook to deal with the controversy, and in 1637 published the *Religion of Protestants*. The book is an admirable controversial exercise, the logical accuracy of which won a warm eulogy from Locke. It is in reality an overgrown pamphlet, free indeed from the worst blemishes of contemporary pamphlet literature, and full of careful argument and wide learning, but not rising far enough above its temporary purpose to become a monumental work like Butler's *Analogy* or Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*. Its style, though clear and vigorous, is not marked by strong individuality, and its line of argument is academic rather than popular. Chill-

ingworth's theological attitude is defined in what is perhaps the best known passage :

‘By the religion of Protestants I do not understand the doctrine of Luther, or Calvin, or Melancthon ; or the Confession of Augusta (Augsburg), or Geneva ; nor the Catechism of Heidelberg, nor the Articles of the Church of England ; no, nor the harmony of Protestant confessions, but that wherein they all agree, and which they all describe with a greater harmony as a perfect rule of their faith and actions, that is, the BIBLE. The Bible, I say, the *Bible* only, is the religion of Protestants. . . . I, for my part, after a long, and (as I verily believe and hope) impartial search of “the true way to eternal happiness,” do profess plainly that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot but upon this rock only. I see plainly, with mine own eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a consent of Fathers of one age against a consent of Fathers of another age, the Church of one Age against the Church of another. . . . In a word, there is no sufficient certainty, but of Scripture only, for any considering man to build upon.

‘Propose me anything out of this book, and inquire whether I believe it or no, and seem it never so incomprehensible to human reason, I will subscribe it, with hand and heart, as knowing no demonstration can be stronger than this—God has said so, and therefore it is true. In other things I will take no man's liberty of judgment from him, neither shall any man take mine from me.’

On the futility of attempts to coerce opinion he is singularly outspoken :

‘To force any man to believe what he believes not, or any honest man to dissemble what he does believe (if God commands him to confess it), or to profess what he does not believe, all the powers in the world are too weak, with all the powers of hell to assist them.’

His reply to the Roman claim to authority over individual reason is effective :

‘ You that would not have men follow their reason, what would you have them follow ? Their passions, or pluck out their eyes and go blindfold ? No, you say, let them follow authority. In God’s name, let them ! . . . But then for the authority you would have them follow, you will let them see reason why they should follow it, and is not this to go a little about ? To leave reason for a short turn, and then to come to it again, and to do that which you condemn in others.’

The claim to the right of private judgment put forth in this volume evoked less hostility from the Arminian leaders (whose object was to regulate practice rather than to dictate beliefs) than from the Puritans, who saw in it an attack on that Presbyterian system which they still hoped might be established on the ruins of the Anglican Church. The effectiveness of the reply to the claim of the Roman Church to infallibility was not made less bitter by the fact that the writer had for a time dwelt within her fold. So by both extreme parties Chillingworth was branded as a turncoat, a Socinian, and a sceptic. His theological standpoint was not without elements of weakness, due partly to his lack of touch with the practical side of life, and it is as an honest inquirer and clear reasoner, rather than as a great writer or theologian, that his reputation still survives.

John Hales is associated with Falkland and Chillingworth as an early advocate of toleration. After a distinguished career at Oxford he accepted an Eton fellowship, and declined all offers of preferment except a canonry at Windsor, which he could hold without leaving his quiet retreat. He acquired a great reputation as a philosopher and preacher, and was distinguished for broad liberality of opinion, which occa-

sionally led him to the verge of heresy. The only work he issued during his life was a tract on *Schism and Schismatics*, published in 1628, in which the right of freedom of opinion is clearly asserted. After his death, his sermons and other papers, including a valuable series of letters from the Synod of Dort, in 1628, were published under the title *Golden Remains*.

Hales's style is simple and unaffected, and his attitude in relation to the church questions of his day generous and liberal. But the influence he exercised cannot adequately be estimated from his writings; his talent and courtesy won the respect of Laud and many other men who did not share his opinions, and the warm admiration of many who, like Sheldon, were destined to become the leaders of the Church of the Restoration. 'He would often say,' Clarendon records, 'that he would renounce the religion of the Church of England to-morrow if it obliged him to believe that any Christian would be damned, and that nobody could conclude another man to be damned who did not wish him so.'

Even in an age of learned men Ussher was looked upon as almost a miracle of erudition. His early life was closely linked with the rise of Trinity College, Dublin, where he became Professor of Divinity in 1607, and Vice-Chancellor in 1615. He won the approval of the king by his advocacy of passive obedience and episcopal government, while his strong Calvinism secured him the favourable regard of the Puritans. He became Bishop of Meath in 1621 and Archbishop of Armagh in 1625. After fifteen years' tenure of the primacy of the Irish Church, he came to England, where he spent the last fifteen years of his life—holding for a time the bishopric of Carlisle *in commendam*. During the Commonwealth he remained on friendly terms with

Cromwell, over whom he exercised, while he lived, a considerable influence.

Ussher was a partisan of neither of the great religious parties of the time. In the episcopal controversy he intervened as an advocate of a compromise, that should retain bishops as the presidents of Presbyterian synods. His writings, which are most of them in Latin, are mainly connected with Christian antiquities. He is remembered now chiefly for his admirable work on the Ignatian Epistles, and for his *Annales*, in which B.C. 4004 is proposed as the date of the Creation.

Bishop Gauden's claim to the authorship of the *Eikon Basilike* alone entitles him to a place in literary history. At the beginning of the Civil Wars he accepted the authority of Parliament, but joined the royalist party when power passed into the hands of the army, and attended the king during the last hours of his life. At the Restoration he was rewarded for his services to the royal cause by the gift of the bishopric of Exeter, from which see he was transferred to Worcester, a few months before his death.

The authorship of *Eikon Basilike* was long a disputed question; but in 1786 the publication of Clarendon's State Papers, including the letters that passed between Gauden and the Lord Chancellor at the Restoration, turned the scale decisively in favour of the bishop's claim. 'This book and figure,' Gauden asserts in the course of the correspondence, 'was wholly and only my invention, making, and design, in order to vindicate the king's wisdom, honour, and piety.'

The evidence in favour of Gauden's authorship of the book, though not universally admitted, is thus very strong; but it is by no means improbable that the materials were supplied by the king himself, and that Gauden's share



was in clothing them in literary form, and undertaking the somewhat perilous task of seeing the volume through the press.

The Arminian movement produced no works worthy of a very high place in English literature. The writings of Laud, consisting of the record of his Controversy with Fisher, the Jesuit, a diary, and a number of sermons, though of much historical and theological value, scarcely vindicate for him a place in literary history. Another member of the same party, Richard Montagu, a fellow of Eton and rector of Stamford Rivers, gained a considerable reputation through the contest with Parliament that arose out of his first book, *A New Gag for an Old Goose*. In this work, which was written in the course of a controversy which Montagu was carrying on with a Roman Catholic opponent in 1624, he boldly discarded the usual Protestant argument against Popery, freely admitted that the Church of Rome was a true Church although corrupt, and claimed for the Church of England a position equally Catholic but less superstitious. The Puritan party at once brought the book under the notice of Parliament, who referred it to Archbishop Abbot; but James, who was too astute a controversialist not to see how much more open the Roman Catholic Church was to the charge of corruption than to that of apostasy, took the author under his patronage, and accepted the dedication of his next book, *Apello Caesarem*—a work which, alike by its argumentative ability and clear caustic diction, earned for Montagu yet more lasting fame as a controversialist. He became a royal chaplain, and three years later was promoted by Charles I. to the bishopric of Chichester.

Robert Sanderson, Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford under Charles I., and one of the chief ornaments of the Church during the Commonwealth period, was promoted at



the Restoration to the bishopric of Lincoln. His *Nine Questions of Conscience Resolved* has won for him a high reputation as a casuist, and his *Sermons* are vigorous and clear, and were held in much repute by his contemporaries. 'I carry my ears to hear other preachers,' is a saying reported of Charles I., 'but I carry my conscience to hear Dr. Sanderson, and to act accordingly.'

One monument of learning remains as a gift from the Commonwealth period in the *London Polyglot Bible*, published during the years 1654-57, under the editorship of Brian Walton, afterwards Bishop of Chester. In this great work, which Professor Craik calls the 'glory of English erudition,' the Scriptures are given wholly, or in part, in nine languages. It was published with a dedication to Oliver Cromwell, but on the Restoration a fresh dedication to Charles II. was substituted. Not the least valuable part of the work was Walton's *Prolegomena*, which has been several times republished separately, and has only lately been superseded by other works on Biblical textual criticism.

## CHAPTER X.

### HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL WRITERS.

THE age of Milton saw English literature enriched with one historical masterpiece in Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion*.

Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, was born in Wiltshire in 1609, and died an exile in France in 1674. His life was therefore exactly contemporary with Milton's. After the usual school and university career, Hyde came to London to read for the bar, and became a member of the Apollo Club, which, however, he afterwards deserted to join the more cultured group of men whom Lord Falkland gathered around him at Great Tew, near Oxford. He prospered at the bar, and, in 1640, was elected member for Wootton Bassett in the Long Parliament. Though he enjoyed the patronage and friendship of Laud, he supported the impeachment of Strafford and the measures proposed for restricting the arbitrary power of the king, and only abandoned the party of Pym and Cromwell when they resolved to lay hands on the episcopal system. Having entered the royal service, he became one of the king's confidential advisers, and a strong supporter of the royal prerogative. At the close of the Civil War he retired for a time to Jersey, where he began to arrange the material for his history. He then joined Charles II., whom he

served faithfully through long wanderings and exile. The Restoration brought him a peerage, and seven years of office as the chief minister of the Crown; but the attempted settlement both in Church and State owed its transitional character to his influence, and won for him the hostility both of disappointed royalists and of dispossessed presbyterians. The sale of Dunkirk, for which he was unjustly suspected of having been handsomely rewarded by Louis XIV., the retrogressive character of his religious measures, and finally the failure of the Dutch war, aroused general hostility to his policy; and Charles was fain to advise him to save himself by flight from an impending impeachment. Clarendon returned to France, where he lived in exile for seven years, dying at Rouen in 1674. During this period he was occupied in welding together into a consecutive narrative the historical and autobiographical fragments that he had written during his previous exile and at other times. The History, which was left practically complete at his death, was published at Oxford in 1702-4; his account of his early life, and the Continuation of the History from the Restoration, were issued together in 1759.

As a statesman, Clarendon was conspicuous for an inflexibility of purpose and an incorruptible integrity which presented the strongest contrast to the unprincipled versatility of most of the leading politicians of the Court of Charles II. He had neither the power of reading, nor the art of conciliating, public opinion, and he clung to theories of government incompatible with the changed position of the restored monarchy; but he failed in a task at which the ablest statesman could hardly have hoped to succeed, and fell as much through the integrity of his character as through the defectiveness of his policy.

Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* belongs to the class

of historical memoirs, rather than to that of histories. It has no pretensions to be exhaustive or judicial, or to be founded on a systematic study of documents and records. Writing to beguile the tedium of enforced retirement from active service, and with the memory of the events which he narrates still vivid and clear before him, Clarendon treats of men and things as they seemed to him in the light of strong royalist sympathy. He is conscious of the greatness of the drama in which he has himself borne a part, and this consciousness gives a dignity to his treatment which almost justifies the description of his work as an 'historical epic.' This sense of the dignity of his subject raises him above petty vindictiveness or spleen, and leads him to do justice to the memory of many a man whose name was anathema to the royalists of the Restoration. Here, for instance, is his description of Cromwell, the magnanimity of which cannot be appreciated unless we apprehend something of the feeling regarding him then current in royalist circles :

‘He was one of those men, *quos vituperare ne inimici quidem possunt, nisi ut simul laudent*; whom his very enemies could not condemn without commending him at the same time: for he could never have done half that mischief without great parts of courage, industry, and judgment. He must have had a wonderful understanding in the natures and humours of men, and as great a dexterity in applying them; who, from a private and obscure birth (though of good family), without interest or estate, alliance or friendship, could raise himself to such a height, and compound and knead such opposite and contradictory tempers, humours, and interests into a consistence that contributed to his designs, and to their own destruction; whilst himself grew insensibly powerful enough to cut off those by whom he had climbed, in the instant that they projected to demolish their own building. What was said of Cinna may very justly be said of him, *ausum eum*,

*quæ nemo auderet bonus ; perfecisse, quæ a nullo, nisi fortissimo, perfici possent :* he attempted those things which no good man durst have ventured on ; and achieved those in which none but a valiant and great man could have succeeded. Without doubt, no man with more wickedness ever attempted any thing, or brought to pass what he desired more wickedly, more in the face and contempt of religion, and moral honesty ; yet wickedness as great as his could never have accomplished those designs, without the assistance of a great spirit, and admirable circumspection and sagacity, and a most magnanimous resolution.

‘ When he appeared first in the Parliament, he seemed to have a person in no degree gracious, no ornament of discourse, none of those talents which used to conciliate the affections of the stander-by : yet as he grew into place and authority, his parts seemed to be raised, as if he had had concealed faculties, till he had occasion to use them, and when he was to act the part of a great man, he did it without any indecency, notwithstanding the want of custom.’

Professor Minto may well say that ‘ Clarendon was too magnanimous, too loftily convinced of the truth of his own cause, to seek to pervert the facts.’

His royalist feeling does not blind him to the faults of the policy of Charles I. and Laud, and we do not forget, in reading his History, that Hyde once stood side by side with Pym and Falkland on behalf of constitutional liberty.

His character-sketches of the leading men of the time are admirably vivid and vigorous, and where softened by the gentle touch of personal affection, generous and discriminating. His sketch of Cromwell has been already quoted ; a few lines from his long description of Lord Falkland may serve as a contrast :

‘ In this unhappy battle (Newbury) was slain the Lord Falkland, a person of such prodigious parts of learning and knowledge, of that inimitable sweetness and delight

in conversation, of so flowing and obliging a humanity and goodness to mankind, and of that primitive simplicity and integrity of life, that if there were no other brand upon this odious and accursed civil war, than that single loss, it must be most infamous and execrable to posterity. . . .

‘He was superior to all those passions and affections which attend vulgar minds, and was guilty of no other ambition than of knowledge, and to be reputed a lover of all good men; and that made him too much a contemner of those arts which must be indulged in the transactions of human affairs.

‘Thus fell that incomparable young man, in the four-and-thirtieth year of his age, having so much dispatched the true business of life, that the eldest rarely attain to that immense knowledge, and the youngest enter not into the world with more innocency; whosoever leads such a life needs be the less anxious upon how short a warning it is taken from him.’

Clarendon at his best, and when dealing with events of which he was an eye-witness, is a splendid narrator, not so much through force of language and imagery as through skilful interweaving of stray details that lingered in his memory. Some of his battle scenes are painted with wonderful vividness and force. Here, for instance, is his account of the end of the battle of Naseby:

‘The king’s reserve of horse, which was his own guards, with himself at the head of them, were even ready to charge those horse who followed those of the left wing, when, on a sudden, such a panic fear seized upon them that they all ran near a quarter of a mile without stopping; which happened upon an extraordinary accident, which hath very seldom fallen out, and might well disturb and disorder very resolute troops, as these were the best horse in the army. The king, as was said before, was even upon the point of charging the enemy, at the head of his guards, when the Earl of Cameworth, who rode next to him (a



man never suspected for infidelity, nor one from whom the king would have received counsel in such a case), on a sudden laid his hand on the bridle of the king's horse, and swearing two or three full-mouthed Scottish oaths (for of that nation he was), said, "Will ye go upon your death in an instant?" and, before his majesty understood what he would have, turned his horse round; upon which a word run through the troops, "That they should march to the right-hand;" which led them both from charging the enemy and assisting their own men. Upon this they all turned their horses, and rode upon the spur, as if they were every man to shift for himself.'

The 'two or three full-mouthed Scottish oaths' and the order to march to the right, are just such touches of humour as break not unfrequently through the grave stateliness of Clarendon's history. As a contrast to this, we may quote the description of the burial of the king:

'Then they went into the Church to take choice of a place for burial. But when they entered into it, which they had been so well acquainted with, they found it so altered and transformed, all tombs, inscriptions, and those landmarks pulled down, by which all men knew every particular place in that Church, and such a dismal mutation over the whole that they knew not where they were; nor was there one old officer that had belonged to it, or knew where our princes had used to be interred. At last there was a fellow of the town who undertook to tell them "where," he said, "there was a vault in which King Harry the Eighth and Queen Jane Seymour were interred." As near that place as could conveniently be, they caused the grave to be made. There the King's body was laid without any words, or other ceremonies than the tears and sighs of the few beholders. Upon the coffin was a plate of silver fixed with these words only, "King Charles 1648." When the coffin was put in, the black velvet pall that had covered it was thrown over it, and then the earth thrown in; which the Governor stayed to see perfectly done, and then took



the keys of the Church, which was seldom put to any use.'

With a total absence of all rhetorical devices, the whole pathos of the scene is brought before us—the disfigured, mutilated church, the casual service of the 'fellow of the town,' and the Governor waiting for the keys, while the earth falls on the velvet pall—sole trapping of royalty left to a fallen king.

Clarendon's prose style has little to commend it. His paragraphs are often of inordinate length, without the melody and rhythm which alone make the involved sentences of Jeremy Taylor and Milton tolerable.

The relation of Clarendon's History to the Memoirs of his own life is somewhat complicated. "As a record of facts," says his latest biographer,<sup>1</sup> "the *History of the Rebellion* is of very varying value. It was composed at different times and with different objects. Between 1646 and 1648 Clarendon wrote a 'History of the Rebellion' which ended with the defeat of Hopton at Alresford in March, 1644. In July, 1646, he wrote, by way of defending the prince's council from the aspersions of Goring and Grenville, an account of the transactions in the west, which is inserted in Book IX. Between 1668 and 1670 he wrote a 'Life' of himself, which extended from 1609 to 1660. In 1671 he reverted to his original purpose, took up the unfinished 'History' and the finished 'Life,' and wove them together into the narrative published as the *History of the Rebellion*. During this process of revision he omitted passages from both, and made many important additions in order to supply an account of public transactions between 1644 and 1660, which had not been treated with sufficient fulness in his 'Life.' As the original 'History' was written

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography.*

when Clarendon's memory of events was freshest, the parts taken from it are much more accurate than those taken from the 'Life.' On the other hand, as the 'Life' was written simply for his children, it is freer in its criticism both of men and events. Most of the characters contained in the *History of the Rebellion* are extracted from the 'Life.' "

The best contemporary history of the Long Parliament is that of Thomas May, drawn up by order of Parliament and published in 1647. May, (1594-1650), whose dramas and translations have already been mentioned, incurred the hatred and contempt of his former friends by his defection from the royal cause, 'losing,' as Clarendon characteristically adds, 'his wits at the same time as he lost his honesty.' He was appointed, with Sadler, secretary or 'Historiographer' to the Parliament, and in that capacity wrote his *History of the Long Parliament*, which closes with the battle of Newbury. Three years later he wrote a shorter history or *Breviary of the History of the English Parliament*, carrying the account on to the end of the war; and died the same year, leaving his longer history uncompleted. On the whole, May's *History* is a colourless production, though the style is easy and fluent. He is generally content to narrate events without comment or criticism, and is equally unmoved by animosity or enthusiasm. Indeed, the personal opinions of the writer only very rarely appear in the course of the record, a fact which seems to indicate either indifference or strong self-repression. May is sometimes happy in his references to Roman history, but, considering his high reputation for learning, the volume is very little 'ornamented' with quotations or illustrations. All this seems to show that the writer's task was perfunctory and ungenial, and that the work was written, like Milton's *Eikono-*

*klastes*, to order, not by choice, but was not inspired, like Milton's pamphlet, with the fire and fervour of strong convictions. Here and there, as in the following account of Dr. Cosin, we see a little of the writer's personal feeling on Church questions :

‘ Among all the men of his rank, Dr. Cosins, Master of St. Peter's, Cambridge, was most noted for superstitions and curious observations in many kinds, a man not noted for any great depth of learning, nor yet scandalous for ill-living, but only forward to shew himself in formalities and outward ceremonies concerning religion, many of which were such as a Protestant state might not well suffer.’

Here, again, is his account of Laud, where we seem to see an attempt at historical impartiality distorted by the desire to justify the ways of Parliament :

‘ A man vigilant enough, of an active or rather of a restless mind, more ambitious to undertake than politic to carry on, of a disposition too fierce and cruel for his coat which notwithstanding he was so far from concealing in a subtle way that he increased the envy of it by insolence. He had few vulgar and private vices, as being neither taxed of covetousness, intemperance nor incontinence, and, in a word, a man not altogether so bad in his personal character as unfit for the state of England.’

Of the chief parliamentary leaders, May speaks with carefully guarded reserve. Contrast with Clarendon's vivid and highly coloured sketch of Cromwell, already quoted, May's account of him as he appeared in 1647, with the best and worst of his life still before him :

‘ Nor could that association (The Eastern Counties' Association) have been possibly made, if those gentlemen had not been curbed and suppressed by that timely care which the Parliament took, and more particularly by the

successful services of one gentleman, Master Oliver Cromwell, of Huntingdon, a Member of the House of Commons, whose wisdom, valour, and vigilance was no less available in this important business than remarkable afterwards in the highest services and greatest battles of the whole war . . . It pleased God to raise him afterwards into the greatest commands, and prosper in so high a measure all his undertakings, that he became within a few years one of the chief props on which the Parliament leaned, and greatest scourges of the other side.'

Sir Richard Baker (1568-1645) 'the last of the Chroniclers,' wrote his *Chronicle of the Kings of England* while confined for debt in the Fleet. 'It is,' says the author, 'compiled with so great care and diligence, that, if all others were lost, this only will be sufficient to inform posterity of all passages memorable or worthy to be known.' The book was several times reprinted, and was popular with the immediately succeeding generation. Though attractive in style, it has no historical value; and the allusion to Baker by Sir Roger de Coverley in the *Spectator* now almost alone perpetuates the memory of his work.

Less interesting, but of far greater historical value, are Whitelock's *Memorials of English Affairs*. Bulstrode Whitelock filled important offices of state under the Commonwealth, and his record of state affairs is full, accurate, and impartial. But it is dull reading, and has no pretensions to literary style.

Reference has already been made to Milton's *History of Britain*, which gives a graphic and interesting account of British and Anglo-Saxon history from the landing of Brutus to the Norman Conquest. "This work," says Mr. Pattison, "must have cost him much labour, bestowed upon comparison of the conflicting authorities. It is the

record of the studies he had made for his abandoned epic poem, and is evidence how much the subject occupied his mind."

Among minor historical works may be mentioned a *History of King James I.*, by Arthur Wilson, a Suffolk gentleman who held for some time the position of Secretary to the Earl of Essex, through whose influence he gained access to many important documents. His history is a work of some merit, and has the advantage of being nearly contemporary with the period with which it deals.

For Scotch affairs, Sir James Balfour's *Brief Memorials and Passages of Church and State* supply a record of the period from 1640-1652, and the *Memoirs of Henry Guthry*, a supporter of Charles I., who became, at the Restoration, Bishop of Dunkeld, extend from 1637 to 1649. 'His narrative fairly deserves the praise of being one of the most temperate and candid specimens of the minor historical literature of the time.'<sup>1</sup>

Collections of state papers cannot, as a rule, claim a place in literature; it will be enough to refer to the most important of those belonging to the period. John Rushworth, assistant clerk of the House of Commons, published in 1659 a valuable collection of papers and records dealing with the years of the Commonwealth. He was, however, accused after the Restoration of having suppressed or garbled documents unfavourable to his party. Clarendon's Collection of State Papers (some of which were published in three volumes in 1767) is of the utmost value for the historian, as is also the Collection made by John Thurloe, secretary to the Council of State and to the Protector, published in 1742. Of the various collections of family documents, now edited in available form, the *Letters and*

<sup>1</sup> Gardiner and Mullinger, Introduction to English History.

*Papers of the Verney Family*, and the *Hamilton Papers* are perhaps the most important, while *Ludlow's Memoirs* contain valuable material illustrative of the Irish policy of the Commonwealth.

Of the numerous biographies of the period two especially call for notice: Hacket's *Life of Archbishop Williams* and Mrs. Hutchinson's *Memoir of Colonel Hutchinson*.

*The Scrinia Reserata: a Memorial offered to the Great Deservings of John Williams, Archbishop of York, and the last of the ecclesiastical Keepers of the Great Seal*, by John Hacket, his chaplain, is one of the most characteristic productions of the period. Williams was the foremost rival of Laud, and the antagonism of these two distinguished men was so pronounced that it is rarely that the partisans of the one have been able to discern any merit in the other. Hacket, who was a staunch royalist, and succeeded after the Restoration to the bishopric of Coventry and Lichfield, regarded his patron with an indiscriminate admiration which detracts considerably from the value of the 'Memorial,' when estimated as a truthful portraiture. As a repertory of anecdote, classical quotations, and caustic humour, however, these two volumes embody, in 455 folio pages, a fund of illustration of the wit and learning of the age; while in relation to the period immediately preceding the Civil War, they have been singled out by Coleridge in his *Table Talk* as affording a better insight into events and parties than can be gained from any other piece of contemporary literature.

The following passage, in which Hacket satirizes Laud for his singular credulity with respect to dreams, exhibits the writer at his best:

'A dream cometh through the multitude of business. That which the fancy is troubled with most in the day, it



rencontres in the night, yet without any deliberation of reason; and therefore must be most groundless to collect an observation from it of any act that hath an intellectual touch in it. I except the infusions of prophetic inspiration, which commonly who can suppose he hath attained without enthusiastical presumption? Juggling astrologers, that will fly at any game for profit and credit, held the people in a dream, how they could interpret dreams which would hit, and which not, by the planet: as Salmasius says (*Clymact.* p. 789), that it was Hephæstion's profession to unfold . . . in what nights of every moon they will happen to be true. But he that *records his dreams*, as if he weighed a thing so light in the balance of observation, his wits are built upon fairy ground and needs no other astrology to deceive him but his own superstition' (II. 86).

The following, where Hacket is endeavouring to repel Milton's deprecatory criticism of the *Eikon Basilike*, is a good example of his narrowness and bigotry:

'Perhaps the King could have wrote better, but I think no man else in the three Kingdoms. What a venomous spirit is in that serpent Milton, that black-mouthed Zoilus, that blows his viper's breath upon those immortal devotions, from the beginning to the end! This is he that wrote with all irreverence against the Fathers of our Church, and showed as little duty to his father that begat him. The same that wrote for the Pharisees, that it was lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause; and against Christ, for not allowing divorces. The same, O horrid! that defended the lawfulness of the greatest crime that was ever committed, to put our thrice-excellent King to death. A pretty schoolboy scribbler, that durst grapple in such a cause with the prince of the learned men of his age—Salmasius—"the delight, the musick of all knowledge," who would have scorned to drop a pen full of ink against so base an adversary, but to maintain the honour of so good a King, whose merits he adorns with this praise—*De quo si quis dixerit omnia bona, vix pro suis meritis satis illum*



*ornaret* (*Contr. Milton*, p, 237). Get thee behind me, Milton, thou savourest not the things that be of truth and loyalty, but of pride, bitterness and falsehood' (II., 161).

Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson's memoir of her husband, Colonel John Hutchinson, after remaining in manuscript for more than a century, was published in 1806, and has since passed through many editions. As a record of the events of the Commonwealth period from the noblest Puritan standpoint—a record instinct with warm personal devotion and unaffected religious feeling—the book has a peculiar interest. It was in order that her children might know the character of their father that Mrs. Hutchinson compiled this memoir, and it has all the simple grace and unstudied vividness of a personal record, meant only for sympathetic readers. In the midst of intrigue, time-serving, and unscrupulous partisanship, the sterling integrity and deep religious sincerity of Colonel Hutchinson stand out conspicuous in his wife's narrative. No other book impresses on us to anything like the same degree the strength of Puritanism at its best, and the refining influence it exercised on the social relations of life. Called from civilian occupations at the outbreak of the Civil War, Colonel Hutchinson, as Governor of Nottingham Castle, played an important part in the struggle with the King, and was one of the judges who signed his death warrant. On Cromwell's usurpation of supreme power, he resigned all offices of state, and lived in retirement till the Restoration, when he was included in the Amnesty. He was, however, arrested three years later for supposed complicity in a plot against the government, and died in prison in the following year.

'He and all his excellences came from God, and flowed back into their own spring; there let us seek them, thither let us hasten after him; there having found him let us

cease to bewail among the dead that which was man, or rather was immortal. His soul conversed with God so much when he was here, that it rejoices him to be now eternally freed from interruption in that blessed exercise; his virtues were recorded in heaven's annals, and can never perish; by them he yet teaches us and all those to whose knowledge they shall arrive.'

It was because Puritanism produced such men as Colonel Hutchinson that it remained a vital force long after its short-lived political triumph had given place to the reaction of the Restoration.

## CHAPTER XI.

### HOBBS AND THE CAMBRIDGE PLATONISTS.

THE age of Milton was an era of revolution in the world of science. The names of Galileo, Kepler, Descartes and Pascal abroad, of Bacon, Napier and Harvey in England, stand out conspicuous as the leaders of a new movement. Napier's little treatise on Logarithms—the beginning of a new age of mathematical development—appeared in 1614, and five years later Harvey made known to a sceptical profession his discovery of the circulation of the blood. Meanwhile, despite all prejudice and intolerance, the Copernican theory was revolutionizing astronomy, and Descartes was preparing himself to be the leader of a new philosophy. On every hand were the signs of change—the passing away of the old. Paris became a great centre of scientific research ; while in London, Sir Thomas Gresham's newly established College formed a meeting place for the men of the new science. Out of these latter informal gatherings sprang, at the Restoration, the Royal Society, with the foundation of which the history of modern scientific development in England takes a definite commencement.

This new spirit colours the literature of the age in various ways. It shows itself in the broad tolerance—almost sceptical in its consciousness of fallibility—of Sir Thomas Browne, the occult philosophy of Sir Kenelm Digby, and the

physical speculations of Dr. Wilkins; while it gives a tone to the later verse of Cowley, Waller and Dryden—all members of the Royal Society.

But it is in Hobbes that speculative thought takes strongest hold of the new world of scientific discovery, and tries to mould it into a consistent philosophical system. It is perhaps somewhat too much to assert that Hobbes was 'the one English thinker of the first rank in the long period of two generations separating Bacon and Locke,' but he was certainly the one Englishman of letters of this period who attempted to make the whole range of philosophic thought his province—'to order the whole domain of human knowledge.'

Thomas Hobbes was born at Westport—now a part of Malmesbury—in the year of the Armada, and was brought up by his uncle. On leaving Oxford in 1608 he was appointed tutor to the son of the Earl of Devonshire, and maintained a close connexion with the Cavendish family during the rest of his life. In London, Hobbes enjoyed the friendship of Bacon, to whom he acted as secretary, Ben Jonson, and most of the wits of the time, while foreign travels gave him the opportunity of making the acquaintance of Galileo, Mersenne, and other leaders of continental scientific thought. With the sole exception of a translation of Thucydides, undertaken in 1628 to show the evils of popular rule in view of the contest over the Petition of Right, Hobbes reached the age of fifty without having published anything. But about 1637, under the stimulus of a newly-acquired knowledge of higher mathematics, he deliberately set about the construction of a complete philosophical system, which was to be developed in three treatises—*De Corpore*, on the fundamental physical and mathematical basis of the system; *De Homine*, on psycho-

logy; and *De Cive*, on political philosophy. No other philosophic thinker set about so ambitious a task till Mr. Herbert Spenser, in our own day, endeavoured to apply the laws of evolution to the whole range of human development. An attempt that even now is often regarded as premature in relation to the basis on which it rests, was not less relatively premature at the time that Hobbes began his work. The empirical method was as yet in its infancy, and the distinction between Science and Philosophy was only dimly recognized. There was, in fact, very little material as yet for the philosopher to work on, and no systematic classification of such material as had been collected. The treatises did get themselves written,—but at long intervals and by no means on the scale, or with the completeness, that Hobbes had originally intended. *De Cive* was privately circulated in 1642, published in Latin in 1647, and translated into English three years later; the *De Homine, or Treatise on Human Nature*, was issued in 1650; and *De Corpore* was published in 1655, and translated next year. Before the meeting of the Long Parliament, Hobbes had fled to Paris, where Cowley, Denham, and other royalist exiles afterwards joined him. Ten years later, finding that the ecclesiastical views of the *Leviathan* were distasteful to the cavalier court he returned to London. Here he was allowed to remain undisturbed till the Restoration, when he succeeded in reconciling himself to the Court, and spent the last nineteen years of his life under the kindly protection of his former pupil, the Earl of Devonshire. During these years he was continually engaged in controversy over theological and mathematical questions growing out of his writings. A pamphlet war with Bishop Bramhall produced one important addition to Hobbes' works—a letter on *Liberty, Necessity, and Chance*, in which his views on Free-Will are most fully stated. His con-

troversies with the mathematicians only produced much acrimonious language from the philosopher, whose knowledge of mathematics was a good deal less complete than his assurance and determination not to own himself mistaken. At the age of eighty-four he composed an *Autobiography* in Latin verse, and two years later completed a vigorous, though singularly unpoetical, translation into English verse of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. *Behemoth*, a History of the Civil Wars in four dialogues, though written soon after the Restoration, was only published in a complete and authorized edition after his death. It has recently been re-published from a still more complete text found in the Library of St. John's College, Oxford. Though full of shrewd observations of men and things, it has no great historical value.

Hobbes died at the age of ninety-two, more suspected as an atheist than admired as a philosopher.

*The Leviathan*, published in 1651, is his most important work, and embodies most completely his characteristic political theories. It is divided into four books, dealing with Man, the Commonwealth, the Christian Commonwealth, and the Kingdom of Darkness—or in other words, with Psychology, Political Philosophy, the relations of Church and State, and theological fallacies. The treatise is undoubtedly coloured by the circumstances of the time, but its basis is Hobbes' theory of right, and of human nature. Assume man entirely selfish (as Hobbes does), actuated by no altruistic instinct, and the remedy for Anarchy is in mutual agreement to obey a common head—a 'Mortal God'—a *Leviathan*. This sovereign power must be indivisible, and supreme both over civil and ecclesiastical matters. Outward conformity it may require; but opinion it neither can, or should, coerce. Though used to defend absolute monarchy, Hobbes' political theory has a liberal element in

its clear recognition that Government exists for the benefit of the governed. *Salus populi suprema lex.*

Any discussion of the general metaphysical basis of Hobbes' philosophy lies outside the range of our subject. Shortly stated, his thesis is that 'physical phenomena are universally explicable in terms of motion.' In the development of this principle he happens upon strange negations, which may excuse, even though they do not justify, the accusation of atheism brought against him by his opponents. In act he was shuffling and vacillating, suffering through life from a natural timidity that unfitted him for resolute action; but as a thinker he was above all things clear and confident—clear often at the expense of completeness, and confident at the expense of truth. It used to be thought that Hobbes owed his philosophic ideas to the inspiration of Bacon, but later writers have failed to trace any evidence of such influence. It was from the Parisian scientific school that Hobbes received his first philosophic impetus, and the direction given to it was his own.

Hobbes' style has deservedly received high praise. It is sententious and weighty, terse and lucid in the highest degree, and enlivened by shrewd strokes of wit and humour. He writes as a man whose one object was to be clearly understood. Undoubtedly, as Mr. Minto says, 'Hobbes owes his reputation for simplicity and clearness in a very large measure to the simplicity of his leading ideas. Both upon mind and upon politics he superinduces simple and plausible theories, assembles the facts that support them, and says nothing about the facts that they do not explain.' But when all this has been said, it still remains a notable achievement for a contemporary of Jeremy Taylor and Browne, and an immediate successor of Bacon, to have written prose neither ornamental nor obscure, and yet not wanting either in vigour or ingenuity of expression. Here



is an extract from the *Leviathan*, which will serve to illustrate these characteristics :

‘ For the Lawes of Nature (as Justice, Equity, Modesty, Mercy, and (in sum) doing to others as we would be done by), of themselves, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry us into Partizanship, Pride, Revenge, and the like. And Covenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all. Therefore, notwithstanding the Lawes of Nature, if there be no Power erected, or not great enough for our security, every man will and may lawfully rely on his own strength and art for caution against other men.

‘ In all places where men have lived by small Families, to robbe and spoyle each other has been a Trade, so farre from being repulsive against the Law of Nature, that the greater spoils they gained the greater was their honour.

‘ And as small families did this, so did Cities and Kingdoms, which are but greater families . . . endeavour, as much as they can, to subdue or weaken their neighbours by open force and secret arts . . . and are remembered for it in after ages with honour.’

Here, again, are a few lines from the last book of the *Leviathan*, on the ‘ Kingdom of Darkness ’:

‘ As men that are utterly deprived from their nativity of the light of the bodily eye, have no idea at all of any such light, and no man conceives in his imagination any greater light than he hath at some time, or other, perceived by his outward senses ; so also is it of the light of the Gospel, and of the light of the Understanding, that no man can conceive there is any greater degree of it, than that which he hath already attained unto . . . But we cannot say that the Church enjoyeth (as the land of Goshen) all the light which to the performance of the work enjoined us by God is necessary. Whence comes it that in Christendom there has been almost from the time of the Apostles such jostling of one another out of their places, both by

Foreign and Civil War? Such stumbling at every little asperity of their own fortune, and every little eminence of that of other men? And such diversity of ways in running to the same mark, Felicity, if it be not Night amongst us, or at least Mist? We are therefore yet in the dark.'

Views such as the foregoing were little likely to please either the ecclesiastical authorities or the universities, which latter bodies he assailed with special severity, and a note in Pepys' *Diary* (September 3rd, 1668) indicates at once the popularity and the partial proscription of the work:

'To my booksellers for Hobbes's *Leviathan*, which is now mightily called for, and what was heretofore sold for 8s., I now give 24s. at the second-hand, and is sold for 30s., it being a book the Bishop will not let be printed again.'

During the Restoration period Hobbes was regarded at Court as a somewhat dangerous ally; by the Church party, as a dangerous freethinker on religious questions; and, after the Revolution, when, under Locke's influence, the social contract had acquired a new meaning, he was branded as a political reactionary. It has been left for James Mill, Hume, and most of all Sir William Molesworth, to do justice to the value of his work in psychology and political philosophy. The stimulus given by his writings to philosophic thought showed itself not only in his professed disciples, whose number was at no time large, but even more strongly in the reaction from 'Hobbism' which appeared most prominently in the writings of the Cambridge Platonists.

The dogmatic intolerance of the age, penetrating alike into the political, social, and domestic life of the people, could not fail to evoke, in minds of a higher order, a spirit of resistance—a spirit nurtured by less narrowed study and by habits of more philosophic thought. The Puritan, who rarely looked back further than the Reformation, read

little beyond his Bible and the divines of his own peculiar school; the Anglican thought his position secure when he could appeal to the fathers and the earlier councils; the Scotch Reformers were never more happily described than in Milton's line:

'New Presbyter was but old Priest writ large;

and Falkland, who demurred to Presbyterianism on account of its *jure divino* pretensions and its despotic interferences alike with private life and civil government, placed his finger on its radical defect when he described it as resulting in 'the destruction of unity under pretence of uniformity.' Falkland's influence, to which the new Broad-church school at Oxford owed its rise, can be no less clearly traced in the important intellectual movement which had already begun at Cambridge.

Joseph Mede, fellow and tutor of Christ's College, affords a corresponding example of a teaching operative rather through oral discourse than published writings. A man of varied culture—he was at once an excellent Greek and Hebrew scholar, a good mathematician, a proficient in history and botany, and a profound divine—he was also eminent as an instructor of youth, and conspicuous for the lively interest and sympathy with which he followed the progress of events throughout Christendom. His theological treatises, dealing largely with prophecy, and especially with the Millenarian controversy, form two bulky folios and reached a third edition. But his best literary monument is to be found in the writings of those whom he had himself instructed or imbued with his tolerant spirit. The duty of intellectual independence and honest inquiry, together with that of charity in commenting on the views of others, sum up in no small measure the broad teaching of Joseph Mede

—a teaching undoubtedly partly inspired by the writings of Francis Bacon, which were now beginning to diffuse their influence throughout the whole field of speculation both philosophical and moral. In the pages of the new school of Cambridge divines, however, we discern an influence which is associated less with the philosophy of Bacon than with that of the illustrious French philosopher, Descartes, whose theories were at first received with enthusiasm in the university, and continued to find a certain measure of acceptance even after Newton's discoveries had been given to the world. The Cambridge Platonists, for so they were termed, derived their name from the manner in which their chief writers sought to exhibit in harmony with their interpretation of Christian doctrine, not only the philosophy of Plato himself, but also the sublime if baseless speculations of the Neo-Platonists of the school of Alexandria, and more especially those of the pagan philosophers, Plotinus and Jamblichus. It illustrates the uncritical character of the prevailing scholarship of their time, that they recognized no distinction between the philosophy of the great teacher at Athens in the fourth century before Christ and that of the prophetic seer who expounded his doctrines at the imperial Roman court in the third century of the Christian era. And it further illustrates the essential weakness alike of the ancient and of the modern school, that just as Plotinus sought to strengthen his hold on the minds of his disciples by laying claim to magical powers, Henry More, in seeking to repel the scepticism of Hobbes, appealed to the overwhelming evidence which attested the existence and active malignity of witches and evil spirits.

Largely theological and controversial, the writings of this notable school of thinkers lie for the most part with-

out the province of these pages, but their influence penetrated the whole domain of English learning and cultured thought. To Mede succeeded Benjamin Whichcote, Provost of King's College—another notable thinker in whom the teacher much transcended the author, and one whose influence over a wide circle of his contemporaries in the university is very imperfectly represented by the *Sermons* and a collection of aphorisms, entitled *Select Notions*, published after his death. Whichcote, in common with his school, imagined that in the Cartesian doctrines they might find the aid which the great Verulam openly admitted his philosophy could not afford. The study of philosophy, as Bacon understood the term, was completely severed from that of Christian theology; for while, he says, the one follows the 'light of Nature,' the other 'is grounded only upon the Word and Oracle of God.' To the Cambridge divine the philosophy of Descartes, which assumed to prove alike the existence of the Deity and to explain 'that vast machine—the universe' by deductions from the evidence of man's internal consciousness, appeared to offer a far more hopeful alliance. A writer of this school, in an account published in 1662 of *The New Sect of Latitude-men*, as they were termed, even goes so far as to say that 'it will be impossible to free religion from scorn and contempt, if her priests be not as well skilled in nature as the people, and her champions furnished with as good artillery as her enemies.' When, accordingly, Hobbes appeared as the assailant of the universities, which, in his *Behemoth*, he compares, as regards their relation to the nation at large, to the wooden horse in Troy—while his principles in philosophy were unmistakably Baconian, in conjunction, however, with an undisguised materialism—the new school at Cambridge thought they discerned an escape from the

difficulties by which they found themselves confronted in a conjunction between the ancient and the new philosophy—between Platonism and Cartesianism.

The part taken by Whichcote in this endeavour was comparatively slight. His main service to the cause was to diffuse among those with whom he came in contact a large-minded spirit and tolerance of divergence of opinion in non-essentials; such being the means whereby he sought to bring about the result which he had most at heart—the allaying of the fierce religious controversies that prevailed. In this aim, indeed, he and Hobbes met upon common ground; and his *Aphorisms*—wise words spoken to the wise—exercised an influence which may be inferred rather than estimated:

‘Heaven is *first* a temper, and *then* a place.’

‘He that is light of belief will be as light of unbelief if he has a mind to it.’

‘Determinations beyond Scripture have indeed enlarged faith, but lessened charity and enlarged divisions.’

‘There is nothing more unnatural to religion than contentions about it.’

‘The first thing in religion is to refine a man’s temper; and the second to govern his practice. If a man’s religion do not do this, his religion is a poor slender thing and of little consideration.’

John Smith, of Queens’ College, a friendless undergraduate whom Whichcote aided and encouraged, repaid his teacher’s care by the ability and eloquence with which he upheld and transmitted a like teaching. His *Select Discourses*, delivered in the College Chapel, ‘contributed,’ we are told by a contemporary, ‘to raise new thoughts and a sublime style in the members of the University,’ and the volume has taken permanent rank as an English classic. ‘These



discourses,' says Tulloch, 'carry us directly into an atmosphere of divine philosophy luminous with the richest lights of meditative genius.' . . . 'John Smith pronounced atheism to be closely connected with superstition, while the two together were the "anti-deities" set up against divine knowledge, and as the former "is engendered by a base opinion of the Deity as cruel and tyrannical," so the latter arises where the same "sour and ghastly apprehension of God" comes in contact with "more stout and surly natures," and provokes them to negation and defiance.' Taking up the theory of the spiritual element in man where Whichcote left it, he gave it more positive form. Religion, he said, demands the spiritual education of all her faculties; and reproducing with deeper utterance the fine conception of the Schoolman—that all human knowledge culminated in theology or the knowledge of the divine—he elaborated it with a power, a pathos and an eloquence which will not suffer by comparison with the productions of some of the ablest writers of the same school in the present century. John Smith died at the early age of thirty-four; but before he passed away, the two foremost representatives of the same movement, Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, were already rising into notice.

Henry More, of Christ's College, the son of a Lincolnshire gentleman, had already, when only a school-boy at Eton, given evidence both of unusual powers and of a singular love of books,—a taste engendered, it would seem, by the experiences of his home life, where his father had been wont to beguile the long winter evenings by reading with him Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, the influence of which is plainly perceptible in More's own poetry. At Emmanuel College, where he entered in 1631, he was soon known as one of the most ardent students in the university; Aristotle and Plato alike, the



later Platonists, especially Plotinus, the writings of Cardan and Julius Scaliger, and the mystic pages of the *Theologia Germanica* may be named as examples of the varied literature which he studied and assimilated. At first it would seem as though his mind had become perplexed rather than nourished by this wide and multifarious research. He became possessed by a spirit of melancholy and scepticism which lasted for several years, but from which he eventually emerged to enjoy for the rest of his life—a life of retirement passed almost entirely within his college walls—a rapturous yet tranquil assurance of philosophic truth which constituted him one of the happiest of men. From such a life no temptation could lure him forth into the world. The ‘Angel of Christ’s College,’ as he was called, is said to have declined not only the mastership of his College but also the Deanery of Christ Church, Oxford, the Provostship of Trinity College, Dublin, the Deanery of St. Patrick’s, and two bishoprics. ‘I have measured myself,’ he said, ‘from the height to the depth, and know what I can do and what I ought to do—and I do it.’ As a prose writer, More can scarcely claim a place in English literature much above that which belongs to many a representative of a past school of theology and religious controversy. His *Divine Dialogues* and his *Mystery of Godliness* were popular, indeed, long after his day, and were admired and read by thinkers like William Law and John Wesley; while Blair in his *Lectures on Rhetoric* has characterized the former work as ‘one of the most remarkable in the English language.’ But with respect to by far the larger proportion of his writings his biographer is fain to admit that ‘they are not generally, I will not say read, but so much as known.’ Their discursiveness, their prolixity, and their repetitions, breathe the atmosphere of a college chamber into which the breezes of the world without rarely penetrated. An almost mo-

nastic theory of the contemplative life pervades the whole; while More himself reposed in the placid conviction that a life thus passed was the most efficacious means whereby

‘ To chase away  
Mind-mudding mist sprung from low fulsome fen.’

More’s poetry, as contained in his *Philosophical Poems*, published in 1647, has been not inaccurately described as ‘the most singular attempt in literature to turn metaphysics into poetry,’ and the intricacy and prolixity of the argument embodied in his longest poem, *A Platonic Song of the Soul*, is certainly calculated to repel all but the most persevering student. Its burden may be described in his own words :

‘ What’s consonant to Plato’s school  
(Which well agrees with learned Pythagore,  
Egyptian Trismegist, and th’ antique roll  
Of Chaldee wisdom, all which time hath tore,  
But Plato and deep Plotin do restore),  
Which is my scope, I sing out lustily.’

Interspersed, however, are passages of a power and beauty which suggest that the genius of the author, if more happily bestowed, would have achieved a wider and more durable reputation. We may cite as a specimen the lines in which ‘Haphe’ (the principle of sensuous apperception) asserts her province as tributary and essential to the recognition by the soul of the external world :

‘ Do not I see ? I slumber not nor sleep.  
Do not I hear ? each noise by shady night  
My mirour represents : when mortals steep  
Their languid limbs in Morpheus dull delight,  
I hear such sounds as Adam’s brood would fright.  
The dolefull echoes from the hollow hill  
Mock howling wolves : the woods with black bedight  
Answer rough Pan, his pipe and eke his skill,  
And all the Satyr-rout’s rude whoops and shoutings shrill :

‘ The night’s no night to me : What ? shall the Owl  
 And nimble Cat their courses truly steer,  
 And guide their feet and wings to every hole  
 So right, this on the ground, that in the air ?  
 And shall not I by night see full as clear ?  
 All sense doth in proportion consist,  
 Arachnæ doth all proportions bear ;  
 All sensible proportions that fine twist  
 Contains : all life of sense is in great *Haphes* list.’

Equally admirable are the lines in which he sums up the theory, held by others of his school, that the soul’s continued existence after death is the meed of a virtuous life below :

‘ But hearty love of that great vitall spright,  
 The sacred fount of holy sympathy ;  
 Prepares the soul with its deep quickning might  
 To leave the bodies vain mortality.  
 Away she flies into Eternity,  
 Finds full accomplishment of her desire ;  
 Each thing would reach its own centrality :  
 So Earth with Earth, and Moon with Moon conspire.  
 Our selves live most, when most we feed our *Centrall* fire.

‘ Thus is the soul continually in life  
 Withouten interruption, if that she  
 Can operate after the fatall knife  
 Hath cut the cords of lower sympathy :  
 Which she can do, if that some energie  
 She exercise (immur’d in this base clay)  
 Which on frail flesh hath no dependency,  
 For then the like she’ll do, that done away.  
 These independent acts, ’tis time now to display.’

Henry More died in September, 1687, and was laid to rest in the chapel of his college. He was followed in the next year by his friend Ralph Cudworth (1617-1688). Ralph Cudworth, who, though educated at Emmanuel, had succeeded in 1654 to the mastership of

Christ's College. *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, although extending in the edition by Birch to four closely printed octavo volumes, is still only a fragment of the vast undertaking which the author himself projected. It may be described, in general terms, as an endeavour to oppose to the Atheistic teaching of Hobbes, the evidence which proves that, throughout antiquity, there always existed a belief concerning the Origin of the Universe, which involved that of a Divine Creator and Mover; while side by side with the denial of the separate existence of Mind or Spirit the affirmative had always been maintained. 'Atheism,' on the other hand, to quote Cudworth's own language, involved 'the displacement of Mind from its position at the head of Nature—the subordination of mind to matter as its outcome and highest flower of development, rather than its Maker and Governor.' The immense field traversed by the author, the lengthened digressions, the frequent quotations in Greek and Latin, and even in Hebrew, and the recondite nature of much of the reasoning will always cause the *Intellectual System* to rank as one of those vast achievements of bygone scholarship of which even the majority of modern students of such literature are content to speak in terms rather of distant respect than of actual knowledge. For an account of its general scope and treatment, the reader may consult the excellent criticism by Tulloch, in the second volume of his *Rational Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century*. Compared with More, Cudworth was less credulous, but he believed firmly in apparitions. The following story, retailed from Plutarch, with the criticism thereon, is a fair example of the general level of the author's treatment of such questions:

'In the time of Tiberius (saith he), certain persons embarking from Asia for Italy, towards the evening sailed by the Echinades, where being becalmed, they heard from

thence a loud voice calling one Thamous, an Egyptian mariner amongst them, and after the third time commanding him, when he came to the Palodes, to declare that the great Pan was dead. He with the advice of his company resolved, that if they had a quick gale, when they came to the Palodes, he would pass by silently; but if they should find themselves there becalmed, he would then perform what the voice had commanded: but when the ship arrived thither, there neither was any gale of wind nor agitation of water. Whereupon Thamous looking out of the hinder deck towards the Palodes, pronounced these words with a loud voice, ὁ μέγας Πάν τέθνηκε, "the great Pan is dead"—which he had no sooner done, but he was answered with a choir of many voices, making a great howling and lamentation, not without a certain mixture of admiration.'

Plutarch, commenting on the story, considers that it is valuable as shewing that 'demons having bodies as well as men were notwithstanding mortal.' Cudworth, however denounces this inference as an idle fancy:

'It is much more probably concluded by Christian writers,' he goes on to say, 'that this thing coming to pass in the reign of Tiberius, when our Saviour Christ was crucified, was no other than a lamentation of evil demons (not without a mixture of admiration) upon account of our Saviour's death happening at that very time; they not mourning out of love for him that was dead, but as sadly presaging evil to themselves from thence, as that which would threaten danger to their kingdom of darkness, and a period to that tyranny and domination which they had so long exercised over mankind.'

Other and less eminent names in this notable school are those of John Worthington, George Rust (afterwards Bishop of Dromore), and Nathaniel Culverwel. Worthington, Master of Jesus College (1650-1660), was the editor of Smith's *Discourses* and also of the writings of Joseph

Mede—the latter in two large folios, a performance with respect to which Tillotson declared that it would be difficult to find ‘so vast a work that was ever published with more exactness.’ Worthington was related to Whichcote by marriage, and family ties thus strengthened their intellectual sympathy; he was also the personal friend and warm admirer of both Cudworth and More, and in his *Diary* and *Correspondence* we have some valuable glimpses of the school of thought which they all in common adorned. George Rust, a fellow of Christ’s College, is chiefly known

as the author of a treatise, *A Discourse of Truth*, which Tulloch describes as ‘like reading Cudworth over in a minor and diluted form.’ Far higher praise belongs to *The Light of Nature*

by Nathaniel Culverwel, a fellow student with John Smith at Emmanuel College, at the time when Whichcote

was a fellow there. The excellent edition of his treatise put forth by Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh, in 1857, rescued this remarkable composition from the oblivion into which it had undeservedly fallen. The discourse was originally designed as a complete vindication of the function of reason in relation alike to natural law and revealed truth—as a bridge over the chasm which so many held must ever separate reason and faith. ‘I shall always reverence a grey-headed truth,’ wrote Culverwel, ‘yet prefer reason, a daughter of eternity, before antiquity, which is the offspring of time.’ His design, however, stopped far short of completion, and his treatise is limited to the exposition of that ‘light of nature,’ styled by him ‘the candle of the Lord.’ Of Bacon, to whom he refers in five different passages, the writer always speaks in terms of high respect; but the subject was not one to commend him to the Puritan party, by whom the treatise appears to have been regarded



with considerable suspicion. In originality, and the command of a lofty glowing rhetoric, Culverwel strongly resembles John Smith, whom, however, Tulloch considers he surpasses 'in exuberance of genius, and flow and fertility of imaginative thoughtfulness.' The following passage, in which he upholds the consent of nations as the best warranty of truth, is a good specimen of his style :

'Surely that must needs be a clear convincing light, that can command respect and adoration from all beholders; it must be an orient pearl indeed, if none will trample upon it. It must be a conquering and triumphant truth that can stop the mouths of gainsayers, and pass the world without contradiction. Surely that is pure gold that has been examined by so many several touchstones, and has had approbation from them all. Certainly it is some transcendent beauty, that so many nations are enamoured withal. It is some powerful music that sets the whole world a dancing. It is some pure and delicious relish, that can content and satisfy every palate. It is some accurate piece, that passes so many critics without any animadversion, without any 'various readings.' It is an elegant picture, that neither the eye of an artist, nor yet a popular eye, can find fault withal. Think but upon the several tempers, and dispositions of men—how curious are some! how censorious are others! how envious and malicious are some! how various and mutable are others! how do some love to be singular, others to be contentious! how doubtful and wavering is one, how jealous and suspicious is another! and then tell me whether it must not be some authentical and unquestionable truth, that can at all times have a certificate and *commendamus* from them all.'

On the whole it may safely be asserted of the Cambridge Platonists that by the manner in which they upheld the novel doctrine of toleration in matters of religious opinion, the right of private judgment, the authority of conscience, and the prerogative of reason, they fostered a spirit of



moderation and enlightened inquiry, which not only became a powerful influence in their own day, but also sensibly affected no inconsiderable portion of our English literature. At the same time, by their loyalty to the national Church, which it was their endeavour to widen, adorn, and purify from within rather than to assail from without, they set a salutary example to those numerous sectaries whose rapid rise and mischievous activity were regarded with alarm by the thoughtful Protestant and with exultation by the Papist.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MISCELLANEOUS PROSE WRITERS.

OF the minor prose writers of the period not dealt with in preceding chapters two only—Selden and Cowley—require more than a passing notice.

John Selden, who shared with Ussher the reputation of the most learned antiquarian of the time, was a voluminous writer of English and Latin treatises on legal and theological subjects. (1584-1654). He came to London from Oxford in 1604, and became a student of the Inner Temple. Through the patronage of Sir Robert Cotton, he secured the friendship of Ben Jonson, Camden, and other men of letters, and in 1613 supplied notes to the first eighteen cantos of Drayton's *Polyolbion*. His earliest English work, *A Treatise on Titles of Honour*, was published in 1614; three years later his fame as an oriental scholar was established by a Latin volume on the Semitic mythology, entitled *De Diis Syriis*. In the following year appeared his *History of Tithes*, a learned enquiry into the origin of the tax which the Church claimed a divine right to enforce. The moderate tone of the treatise did not save its author from the censure of the High Commission Court, which compelled him to retract his assertions, and secured the suppression of the book. Though this experience of religious intolerance did not bring about any open breach between Selden and the

ecclesiastical authorities, it led him to support the popular party in their struggle with the king. But when the Petition of Right had been won, Selden was received back into royal favour, and in 1635 obtained the King's sanction for the publication of his *Mare Clausum*, a treatise that had been written about fifteen years earlier as a rejoinder to the claim to freedom of the high seas put forward by Grotius in the *Mare Liberum*.

As the political contest grew keener, Selden gradually withdrew from active political life, and devoted himself to Oriental and legal studies. He remained on friendly terms with the leaders of the party in power, and in 1646 subscribed the Solemn League and Covenant. The respect in which he was held among men of all parties is attested by Clarendon's warm eulogy. 'He was of so stupendous a learning in all kinds and in all languages—as may appear in his excellent writings—that a man would have thought he had been entirely conversant amongst books, and had never spent an hour but in reading and writing ; yet his humanity, affability, and courtesy was such, that he would have been thought to have been bred in the best courts, but that his good nature, charity, and delight in doing good exceeded that breeding.'

The volume of *Table Talk*, on which Selden's literary reputation now chiefly rests, was published in 1689 by his amanuensis, Richard Milward. The genuineness of this collection of sayings has been called in question, but there seems to be no reason to doubt the assertion of the editor, who states that he had been in the habit of committing to writing from time to time fragments of his master's conversation.

Selden's style is crabbed and sometimes obscure, while most of his treatises are overweighted with the ponderous learning of their author. Clarendon, while admitting the

harshness and obscurity of his writings, records that "in his conversation he was a most clear discourser." His *Table Talk* bears out this description. It is full of quaint humour and pleasant satire, combined with much admirable common sense. Many of the sententious remarks in the volume indicate Selden's strong resentment against religious bigotry and intolerance, but there is no malice in the whimsical anecdotes and allusions in which the book abounds. Altogether, the *Table Talk* shows Selden as a genial, shrewd, and sensible observer of men and things, whose mind had neither been soured by theological controversies, nor warped by legal studies.

Cowley, whom his contemporaries regarded as one of the greatest of English poets, claims recognition here as the writer of a few essays, the easy grace and unaffected humour of which give them a high place among the prose writings of the period. These essays were written during the quiet years that followed on the Restoration, and they breathe a spirit of tranquil resignation, with here and there a slight touch of bitterness at the inadequate reward given to faithful service for the royalist cause. Mr. Minto suggests that the purity and ease of Cowley's prose style was due to the fact that for ten years he had conducted the correspondence of the exiled royal family, 'a kind of experience likely to purify his language both from bookish terms and from poetical ornaments.'

The total amount of his prose work is small, consisting of eleven essays and two papers—a short *Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy* and a *Discourse by way of Vision, concerning the Government of Oliver Cromwell*. There is little that is fresh in the other topics with which he deals—Solitude, Procrastination, Avarice, and the like—but the treatment is relieved by amusing

anecdotes, witty sayings and happily applied quotations. The following passage, from the essay on Obscurity, is a fair specimen of the general style of his prose :

‘Upon the whole matter, I account a person who has a moderate mind and fortune, and lives in the conversation of two or three agreeable friends, with little commerce in the world besides, who is esteemed well enough by his few neighbours that know him, and is truly irreproachable by anybody ; and so, after a healthful quiet life, before the great inconveniences of old age, goes more quietly out of it than he came in—for I would not have him so much as cry in the exit: this innocent deceiver of the world, as Horace calls him, this *muta persona*, I take to have been more happy in his part than the greatest actors that fill the stage with show and noise ; nay, even than Augustus himself, who asked, with his last breath, whether he had not played his farce very well.’

Cowley is perhaps the earliest master of the new style of prose writing that came in with the Restoration—a style which Burnet sums up as ‘clear, plain, and short.’ The same characteristics appear in the writings of his contemporary and friend, Dr. John Wilkins, whose *Discovery of a New World*, published in 1638, has a special interest as one of the earliest products of the new school of scientific investigation. The author, a partisan of the Parliament, became Warden of Wadham College, Oxford, during the Commonwealth, and in 1656 married a sister of the Protector. He was appointed to the headship of Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1659, but was ejected at the Restoration. He subsequently made his peace with the Court, and, through the influence of the Duke of Buckingham, became Bishop of Chester four years before his death. His great learning and high position made him a connecting link between the new scientific movement that centred in the Royal Society and

John Wilkins  
(1614-1672).

the Broad Church party that was growing up under the leadership of his friend and son-in-law Tillotson, in whose prose style his influence is clearly seen. Burnet, who belonged to the same party, warmly eulogises his courage, moderation, and goodness. 'He was the wisest clergyman I ever knew. He was a lover of mankind, and had a delight in doing good.'

His best-known work, published when he was only twenty-four years of age, was entitled *The Discovery of a New World; or a Discourse tending to prove that it is probable there may be another Habitable World in the Moon; with a Discourse concerning the Possibility of a Passage thither*. In this treatise the learned doctor gravely discusses the practicability of a journey to the moon, and shows much ingenuity and humour in disposing of the serious difficulties in the way of such an attempt. Another treatise entitled *A Discourse concerning a New Planet*, which appeared two years later, is interesting as the earliest attempt of an English astronomer to maintain the Copernican theory of Galileo. His last literary work, published by the Royal Society in 1668, was *An Essay towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language*.

Dr. Wilkins was the author of a number of other philosophical and theological treatises, which are now forgotten. He deserves a place among the minor prose writers of the period chiefly as the pioneer of that more concise, exact and pointed literary style, which is especially associated with the literary history of the Restoration period.

A more interesting figure in the scientific world of the time is that of Sir Kenelm Digby. His friendship with Descartes, Hobbes and other leaders of the new philosophy invested his erratic speculations with an importance that they little deserved. Though he was in close intercourse with

Sir Kenelm Digby  
(1603-1665).

the chief men of science of the time, his writings are a singular medley of Aristotelian Philosophy, Astrology, Alchemy, and absurd superstitions. His romantic courtship of Venetia Stanley—the history of which is recorded in his *Private Memoirs*, published in 1827—his successful privateering expedition in 1627, and the various confidential missions in which he was engaged on behalf of the Queen, and subsequently in the service of the Protector, all serve to perpetuate the memory of one of the most picturesque and eccentric characters of the period. His two most important works—*Of Bodies*, and *Of the Immortality of Man's Soul*—were published in Paris in 1644, and owe much to the influence of Thomas White, a Roman Catholic philosopher with whom Digby lived for some time. Cowley, in dedicating to Sir Kenelm Digby his Pastoral Comedy, *Love's Riddle*, in 1638, writes :

‘ Learning by right of conquest is your own,  
And every liberal art your captive grown ; ’

Evelyn, on the other hand, writing after the Restoration, describes him as an ‘ errant mountebank.’

As a writer on political philosophy, James Harrington has vindicated for himself a place in the literary history of the Commonwealth period. In early life he resided for some time at the Hague, and subsequently at Venice. It was at these places that he imbibed those republican views which he afterwards embodied in his *Oceana*. After his return to England, he was for some time in personal attendance on Charles I. during his imprisonment. On the death of the King he retired from political life and occupied himself in the composition of *Oceana*, which was published in 1656. While passing through the press the book was seized by order of the Protector, but Harrington succeeded in inducing

James Harrington  
(1611-1677).



him not only to permit its publication, but even to allow it to be dedicated to him. In the ideal Republic sketched in *Oceana* all power depends on land, the allotment of which is regulated by strict agrarian laws. The scheme of election of magistrates by ballot in rotation forms the basis of the political constitution. The style of the treatise has little to commend it, but some of the views propounded are ingenious and suggestive. The book gave rise to some controversy, and after the Restoration, Harrington's vigorous advocacy of the same views led to his imprisonment on a charge of treason. During the last years of his life he was prevented by mental derangement from pursuing any further his literary career.

The writings of Isaac Walton, whose *Complete Angler* has attained to the position of an English classic, are dealt with in the succeeding volume of this series, but those of his contemporary, James Howell, belong to this period. The author of the *Familiar Letters* has survived in English literature as a retailer of lively and agreeable gossip and anecdote. It fell to his lot to travel abroad as agent for a patent glass manufacturer, and subsequently in other capacities, and being of an observant and inquiring mind he gathered a store of miscellaneous information on men and things, which he published between 1645 and 1655, in a series of volumes entitled *Epistolæ Ho-eliæ* or *Familiar Letters*, purporting to be addressed to a wide circle of distinguished acquaintances. On the outbreak of the Civil War he had been made Clerk of the Council, but being 'prodigally inclined' he was shortly after arrested for debt and spent some years in the Fleet prison, supporting himself by translating and writing. At the Restoration he became Historiographer Royal, a post he held till his death in 1666. Mr. Minto says, 'Howell had something of the versatile

activity of Defoe: like Defoe he travelled on the continent for commercial purposes, and, like Defoe, he was often employed on political missions. Only, Howell had less power than the later adventurer, and was less intensely political, observing men good-humouredly, and recording his observations with sparkling liveliness.' Howell's style is careless and colloquial, but his *Letters* will always retain their interest as a record of the life of the time, and for their genuine literary merit.



## CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY.

### ENGLISH LITERATURE.

### MILTON'S LIFE.

- |                                                 |                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1624. Death of Fletcher.                        |                                                              |
| 1625. Bacon's <i>Essays</i> (final form).       | Milton entered at Christ's College, Cambridge.               |
| 1626. Death of Bacon and Andrews.               |                                                              |
| 1628. Birth of John Bunyan.                     |                                                              |
| Harvey's <i>De Motu Sanguinis</i> .             |                                                              |
| Hobbes' Translation of <i>Thucydides</i> .      |                                                              |
| 1629. Massinger's <i>Roman Actor</i> .          | <i>Nativity Ode</i> , written Christmas, 1629.               |
| 1630.                                           | <i>Epitaph on Shakespeare</i> .                              |
| 1631. Birth of Dryden. Death of Donne.          |                                                              |
| 1632. Second Folio Edition of Shakespeare.      | Milton retires to Horton.                                    |
| 1633. Prynne's <i>Histriomastix</i> .           | Composition of <i>L'Allegro</i> , <i>Il Penseroso</i> , etc. |
| Herbert's <i>Temple</i> .                       |                                                              |
| Phineas Fletcher's <i>Purple Island</i> .       |                                                              |
| Massinger's <i>A New Way to Pay Old Debts</i> . |                                                              |
| 1634. Habington's <i>Castara</i> .              | <i>Comus</i> at Ludlow Castle.                               |
| Ford's <i>Perkin Warbeck</i> .                  |                                                              |
| 1635. Quarles' <i>Emblems</i> .                 |                                                              |

## ENGLISH LITERATURE.

1635. Selden's *Mare Clausum*.  
 1636. Massinger's *Great Duke of Florence*.  
 1637. Death of Ben Jonson.  
     Descartes' *Discours sur la Méthode*.  
     Chillingworth's *Religion of Protestants*.  
 1638. Wilkin's *Discovery of a New World*.  
 1639. Death of Massinger.  
     Fuller's *History of the Holy War*.  
 1640. Carew's *Poems*.  
     Walton's *Life of Donne*.  
 1641. Smectymnuan Controversy, etc.  
 1642. Browne's *Religio Medici*.  
     Hobbes' *De Cive*.  
 1643. Death of Falkland.  
 1644. Death of Chillingworth and Quarles.  
 1645. Fuller's *Good Thoughts in Bad Times*.  
     Howell's *Epistolæ Holianæ*.  
     Waller's *Poems*.  
 1646. Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*.  
     Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple*.  
 1647. Cowley's *Mistresse*.  
     More's *Platonic Song of the Soul*.

## MILTON'S LIFE.

Publication of *Lycidas*.

Milton leaves England for Italy.

Milton returns to England.

*Epitaphium Damonis*.

Milton in Aldersgate Street.

*Of Reformation in England; Prelatical Episcopacy; Reason of Church Government.*

*Animadversions. Apology for Smectymnusus.*

Milton's marriage.

*Tractate on Education. Areopagitica.* Divorce pamphlets.  
 First edition of Collected Latin and English Poems.

Milton and his wife at the Barbican.

## MILTON'S LIFE.

- |       |                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                             |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1647. | May's <i>History of the Long Parliament.</i><br>Taylor's <i>Liberty of Prophesying.</i>                                                                                       |                                                                                             |
| 1648. | Herrick's <i>Hesperides.</i>                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                             |
| 1649. | Eikon Basilike.<br>Lovelace's <i>Lucasta.</i><br>Fuller's <i>Good Thoughts in Worst Times.</i>                                                                                | <i>Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.</i><br>Milton Latin Secretary.<br><i>Eikonoklastes.</i> |
| 1650. | Taylor's <i>Holy Living and Holy Dying.</i><br>Vaughan's <i>Silex Scintillans.</i><br>Baxter's <i>Saints' Everlasting Rest.</i><br>Fuller's <i>Pisgah Sight of Palestine.</i> |                                                                                             |
| 1651. | Hobbes' <i>Leviathan.</i><br>D'Avenant's <i>Gondibert.</i><br>Cleveland's <i>Poems.</i>                                                                                       | <i>Defensio pro Populo Anglicano.</i>                                                       |
| 1652. | Filmer's <i>Original of Government.</i>                                                                                                                                       | Milton at Westminster. Total loss of sight.                                                 |
| 1653. | Walton's <i>Complete Angler.</i>                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                             |
| 1654. | Death of Selden.                                                                                                                                                              | <i>Defensio Secunda.</i>                                                                    |
| 1655. | Taylor's <i>Golden Grove.</i><br>Stanley's <i>History of Philosophy.</i>                                                                                                      | <i>Sonnet on Piedmont Massacres.</i>                                                        |
| 1656. | Harrington's <i>Oceana.</i><br>Fuller's <i>Church History.</i><br>Cowley's <i>Davideis.</i><br>Davenant's <i>Siege of Rhodes</i> acted.                                       |                                                                                             |
| 1657. | Polyglot Bible.                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                             |
| 1658. | Browne's <i>Hydriotaphia and Garden of Cyrus.</i>                                                                                                                             | Death of Milton's second wife.                                                              |

## ENGLISH LITERATURE.

1659. Chamberlayne's *Pharonnida*.  
Hales' *Golden Remains*.  
Pearson's *Exposition of the Creed*.
1660. Taylor's *Ductor Dubitantium*.  
Commencement of Royal Society.
1661. Death of Thomas Fuller.
1662. Fuller's *Worthies*.
1663. First part of *Hudibras*.  
Cowley's *Cutter of Coleman Street*.  
Dryden's *Wild Gallant*.
1664. Waller's *Collected Poems*.
- 1665.
1666. Death of Shirley.
1667. Death of Cowley and Taylor.
1670. Dryden made Poet Laureate.
- 1671.
- 1673.
1674. Death of Herrick and Clarendon.

## MILTON'S LIFE.

*Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes; Way to Remove Hirelings; etc.*

Milton in Holborn and in Jewin Street.

*Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth.*

Milton's third marriage.

Milton at Bunhill Fields.

Milton at Chalfont St. Giles.  
*Paradise Lost* completed.

Publication of *Paradise Lost*.

*History of Britain to the Conquest.*

Publication of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*.

*Of True Religion, Heresy, and Schism. Early Poems* republished.

Second edition of *Paradise Lost. Epistolæ Familiares, and Pro-  
lusiones Oratoriæ. Death of  
Milton (Nov.)*.



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